

St Andrew's Church

5th Sunday in Lent

Newsletter for 21st March 2021

10.00am Mass on Zoom

Celebrant; Brother John

Preacher; Stuart

Collect

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading

Jeremiah 31;31-4

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Gospel

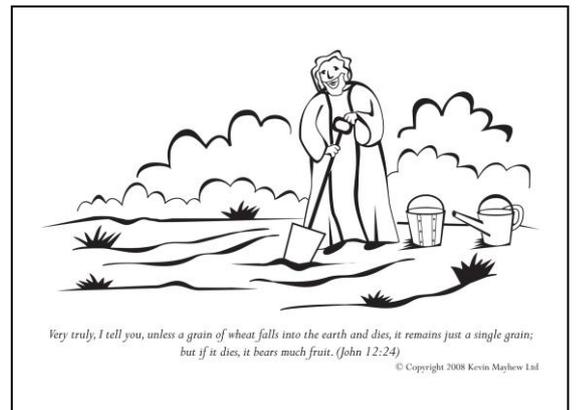
John 12;20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The

crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.



Post Communion Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Please pray for people who are sick or in need of prayer: Gill Ludford, Kirsty, the Hall family, the Yoruba people of Nigeria – for peace and security, for the people of Tanzania in grief at the death of their president and a peaceful transition of power, for the people of Burma – for peace and justice. For Cape Primary School.

For those who have died: John Magufuli, President of Tanzania. Jane Askew.

Anniversary of death: Israel Martin, Syd Melbourne.

Birthdays: Gill Ludford.

Notices

- **Holy week and Easter Services. Please note church is reopening for some services. Thanks be to God.**

Palm Sunday March 28th 10.00am Eucharist on Zoom. The Palms will be blessed, ready for collection in church on Easter Sunday.

Maundy Thursday April 1st 7.30 pm Eucharist on Zoom, followed by a vigil with readings until 9.00pm

Good Friday April 2nd Service in Church 2pm-3pm – readings, reflections and hymns to listen to.

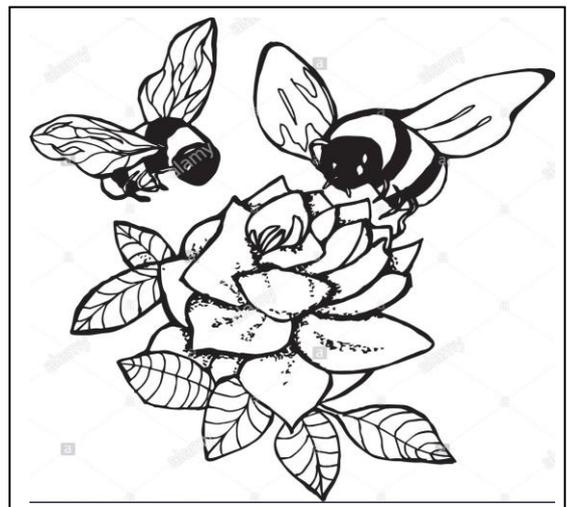
Holy Saturday April 3rd Service of Light on Zoom 8pm. Please prepare a darkened room, and have a candle ready to light during this service.

Easter Sunday April 4th 10.00am Eucharist. Also 2pm Eucharist in Church. A second Eucharist has been arranged because there will be limited space in church for reasons of safety.

- There will be a fundraising coffee morning on the Thursday after Easter, April 8th. Please give generously. Suggested donation £10. Virtual coffee, virtual cake, real live conversation.

A Poem by Gill Ludford.

Isolated, but never alone
Steeped deeply in the beauty of creation
I see anew
The wonder of Thy hand.
Colours hot, cold, vivid,
Dazzling and subdued.
A mellow canopy of leaf green
Reaches for the azure sky
Wherein the soft down of sailing clouds
Drifts through the gentle breeze
Tunefully bright birds carol in Thy praise
Sweet music on the dewy dawn.
Warm sun unlocks
The fragrance of a myriad flowers.
Bees are pleased; they hum with joy.
Embraced by the splendour of Thy creation
Thou and I together
In my isolation.



Session 6: Finding echoes of the story of Jesus in our world today.

Thursday 25th March 2021 – 7.00pm

Featured Bible Passage

- Acts 17:16-34

Summary

This session explores how we can share the good news by bridging from common references such as books and films. With Paul's sermon at Athens providing the principal example, this session aims to equip you to share the good news in this way, outlining key practices and questions to consider as you do so. The session also features a video interview...

This session is based around Chapter 6 of Hannah Steel's book *Living His Story*. A featured passage is below, but you are encouraged to read the whole chapter as the questions often reference the book.

Featured Passage

One of the best examples of this thoughtful gift-giving approach is seen in Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17. He shows us an example of intelligent and imaginative evangelism. Athens was a famous location in the first-century world. Boasting a strong intellectual heritage from the Greek philosophers of the fourth and fifth centuries BC (the likes of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates), its incorporation into the Roman Empire had not dampened its reputation as a city of immense intellectual and educational importance. Paul had grown up in the city of Tarsus, which was also well known as a centre of philosophy and a plethora of Hellenistic religious cults. While Paul was steeped in the Scriptures as a Pharisee, his background in philosophy meant he was well prepared for his missionary trip to Athens.

As was his usual custom, Paul goes to the central meeting places of this historic and busy city. He speaks the good news of Jesus in the synagogue but also in the marketplace. It is not long before Paul is creating a stir and arousing the interest of the philosophers of the day. In particular Luke mentions the Epicureans and the Stoics, who gathered around to hear him speak and to debate his ideas. The Epicureans were agnostic secularists; they were not concerned about the possibility of gods, as they considered them too far removed to be relevant to human life even if they were real. The Stoics, on the other hand, were pantheists who believed in a strong sense of unity between humanity and the divine. To the Stoics, God is everything and everything is God. While these two types of philosophers were very different from one another, Paul's preaching about the good news, and in particular the idea of resurrection, clearly aroused a response. Whether they wanted to argue against him and disprove his new and unfamiliar teaching or whether they were intrigued by the possibility of Paul's new teaching, they all wanted to hear more and so brought him to the Areopagus, a place where the latest ideas were discussed and debated. Despite the apparent pluralism of Athens, Paul's teaching about Jesus and the resurrection caused a stir and people were intrigued. Paul had a captive audience of philosophers and the latest thinkers of the day when he addressed the crowd.

However, before looking at Paul's approach in Athens, it is worth noting how Paul initially felt when he arrived in this strange and unfamiliar place that had not yet heard the good news of Jesus. Luke tells us early on that Paul 'was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols' (Acts 17.16). A more literal translation of Paul's deep distress might be that 'Paul's spirit was pained within him'. Just the sight of this huge city bursting to the brim with idols to various different gods caused a visceral response for Paul the evangelist. His belief in the uniqueness of Jesus as the way to the Father stood in stark contrast to the religious world view in front of him. Gone is the hot-headed Saul who would have his way through coercion and control, as we see at the beginning of Acts. Instead, we see a different Paul, still as passionate and zealous but now resolute to show that the deepest desires of the Athenians can only be adequately met by the risen Jesus. Paul is determined to show this with wisdom, grace, and clarity. In so doing, he provides us with an effective model for how we can present the gift of the gospel in such a way that it relates to people's deepest longings and connects with the culture around us. The gospel cannot be delivered in a vacuum but is always spoken in a particular language, clothed in particular phrases and concepts. Paul's model shows us how to do that in the different situations in which we find ourselves, especially those where the message of the gospel seems peculiar or even alien to the surrounding culture. What we see in Acts 17 is imaginative evangelism at its very best.

Discussion Questions

1. Which book or film that you have recently absorbed might give you a way of sharing the gospel – or more generally talking about the big questions of life – with others?
2. Do you regularly check out some of the things causing a stir in popular culture and, if not, how might you (enjoyably!) keep yourself well informed?
3. In what book, film, drama, musical, TV programme or radio broadcast do you find a winning presentation of the gospel?