



**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020  
Notices, Reflections, and  
weekly quiz**



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In Partnership (The Partnership Monthly magazine): <http://wswinlyd.org.uk/news>

**Prayers for today**



Do please let us know if there is someone you would like to add to the list for prayer, remembering that we must have the permission of the person for whom we would be praying. Please pray for Paulette, Sarah, Hazel and all those you know who are in need of God's special love, care and healing. We pray for our ministers Clive, Rachael, Trevor and Teresa and all our worship leaders; bless them with wisdom and strength for the challenges of each day. Please pray for the Partnership and your home congregation that they may be sustained until we can meet together again. We pray for Grace, Peace and a way forward in your Love in these uncertain times in our lives. May we continually thank God for his great Love and Faithfulness.

**Church News**

Proposed Prayer Garden: If you walk past the church you may notice a white circle on the grass that will be the site of the new sensory prayer garden with two seats close by. We are looking into the costing at the moment. Watch on this space to see how it develops.

**Bible Study every Wednesday for 6 weeks**

On Wednesday we started our weekly online Bible Study from: 7.30 – 9.00pm

To join us Phone 020 3321 5238

When asked for a code to access the call: type – 367 633 661#

Yesterday we looked at Isaiah chapter 37

Next week we will be looking at Ezekiel chapter 37

Everyone is welcome.

If you can read the chapter in advance that is great, but don't worry if you haven't.

Each week we will be looking at parts of the bible which have been chosen by different people and has meaning for them.

**Services for this Sunday**

**Local URC** Emmanuel Church Rev Gerald England <https://www.emmanuelhaydonwick.org.uk/>

**National URC Service on line** [dailydevotions@urc.org.uk](mailto:dailydevotions@urc.org.uk)

Dear Friends,

Sunday's service of Holy Communion is led by the Rev'd Stewart Cutler minister of St Ninian's Church in Stonehouse, a partnership between the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church. Hymns include William Whiting's Eternal Father, Strong to Save, Priscilla J Owens' Will Your Anchor Hold?, Brian Wren's I Come With Joy To Meet My Lord, a lovely Sanctus from Argentina in both Spanish and English,

and Cecil Francis Alexander's Jesus Calls O'er the Tumult.

The service will be sent out, as normal, at 9.45 on Sunday morning for a 10am start. If you have any problems receiving it please read on for advice.

with every good wish. The Rev'd Andy Braunston Coordinator, Daily Devotions from the URC

### **Reading for this week Matthew 14:22-33. Jesus Walks on the Water**

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."



### **Prayer**

Ever present God, in Jesus, you have given us hope. Yet when the waters are turbulent and the wind against us, we become unsure.

At times we are rendered sightless by our circumstances, unable to see you for who you are, so we mix you in as part of turbulence:

Yet when we fear the waters are just too much it is on the waters that you come.

Ever-gracious God, when we reach out – even in our disbelief – you are there to hold our hands.

You encourage us to be brave, to step out on the waters – for you are there, ready to walk alongside.

Though the waters may threaten to overwhelm us, and the winds consume us, and though sometimes we may doubt you, grant us the courage to step out on the waters with our thoughts fixed on you:

For when we fear the waters are too much It is on the waters that you come Amen.

*Mark Robinson –Tessa Henry-Robinson URC Prayer book 2020*

### **Rev. Rachael's Reflections – Keep Fit** – You Tube link [https://youtu.be/m6\\_2yWtcNxQ](https://youtu.be/m6_2yWtcNxQ)

I had a new experience last week - I went with Graham to have a COVID-19 test done before he flew overseas on his forces deployment. Watching him perform the test, I was very glad that I didn't need to have one myself - it didn't look very pleasant! This was just one of many different tests he's had to do in the last few weeks to make sure he's prepared for 3 months working on a military base abroad. Some tests were online, some were practical, like checking his respirator and going on the shooting range, and one of the tests was a fitness test. His main concern about that one was that he had to do it on a very hot day when shuttle runs seemed particularly arduous!

### **Newsletter Admin**

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At the start of last week there was a lot on the news about the government's new strategy for the nation's fitness. There was a lot about getting us to eat more healthy food and less sugar and convenience stuff, as well as some incentives to be more active, like getting cycling on prescription and so on! I notice we didn't hear much more about it after the initial headlines but we'll see what happens. There's always a lot of talk about the nanny state, and generally the government want people to make good choices of their own free will and not because there will be some kind of penalty if they don't. How the balance is struck this time around remains to be seen.

Fitness applies to us in all kinds of ways and doesn't just apply to our physical or mental well-being. I think this period of lockdown has given us the opportunity to think about every aspect of our lives and wonder about meaning and value. When shops closed and activities stopped and families and friends could no longer meet together we were given the ideal opportunity to think about how we spend our time and money. We came to realise that there are some things we really cherish, and we might even be wishing that we had paid more time and attention to them in the past. There are other things we may have spent a lot of time on, either in our work or our free time in the past, and we might now be thinking what on earth were we doing investing so much energy there? We're invited to ask ourselves, how does our work time, our leisure time, our family time add to our overall fitness and well-being? What's not of benefit? What's causing us harm? What needs to be different?

Just as we need to pay attention to our physical and emotional fitness, we also need to invest some time and energy into our spiritual fitness. It doesn't just happen like magic while we're getting on with something else. Some intention is needed, and we're invited to make choices. I believe that God provides spiritual food for all of us in many different ways. Part of that is the kind of spiritual food we might find when we study the Bible or talk with other Christians. Some of it we might find when we're silent in prayer, listening for the murmuring of the Holy Spirit who speaks to us in words and pictures and thoughts that seem to come from nowhere and just won't go away. But there is still more! Perhaps the contemplation of the natural world, or the enjoyment of art and music speak to our souls in ways we can't explain.



Think about those things that make your heart sing! Think about those times when you feel almost physically that your heart is expanding in your chest and you are overwhelmed with a sense of love and goodness. All those things are spiritual food, provided by God for our nourishment and enrichment. They invite us into joy and gratitude, and into acknowledging the one who has given them. The other day when I was out walking a little mouse ran out of the grass in front of me and I actually laughed out loud! This briefly joyful experience led me into a much deeper contemplation about God's care for the mouse and God's care for me, the wonder of nature and the struggles we all face at times. I thought about how the mouse might have felt about seeing me, and I thought about my response to those huge obstacles that are sometimes suddenly in my path. I thought about how God holds it all, and I felt overwhelmed with thankfulness. I might not have noticed the mouse, and noticing it I might not have recognised it as a way in which God was offering me some spiritual nourishment that day - but I am grateful that I did on that occasion.

Keeping spiritually fit is a discipline. Henri Nouwen wrote that it takes discipline to prevent everything in your life from being filled up. He wrote that a life without a lonely place becomes destructive. There are lots of things and people that clamour for our attention, and not all of these are constructive. Sometimes we need to work hard to find that inner space that our souls need for flourishing. Many of us lead busy lives, and many of us think that to add anything extra would be impossible. Sometimes we might think that God will only feed us in those moments when we can shut ourselves away from everyone and everything

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and put our religious hats on. One of the things that's not easy to learn, although I think it is essential to learn it for our own sanity and well-being, is how to find that space, that connection with the greater unseen force that I believe is God, even in the midst of busyness and stressfulness.

Fitness isn't just about what we take in. It's also about what we give out, what we expend. If we take in a lot of calories in food but don't use many up in exercise then we will gain weight and ultimately that is detrimental. In the same way, we can seek spiritual nourishment, and we can consume all we can of it, but if we are not exercising our faith and if we are not giving out then we will suffer. Perhaps it could be described as the path to spiritual obesity, where all we seek is for spiritual food for our own sake, regardless of what others around us may need.

I like my food a lot! I like cooking and I like baking, and generally I like eating too! During lockdown there has been a lot of this going on! But I've also tried to keep active and do plenty of walking so that I can enjoy the food even more. In the same way, during lockdown I have found more spiritual nourishment



than I have ever known before in my life, partly because it seems that God is giving me a greater awareness and openness to all these things. But I'm aware that I need to use all this - for the good of the church and the benefit of the wider world. I don't want to have a flabby faith that is content to sit in blissful isolation consuming everything that comes my way. I want a muscular faith, the kind of faith that is exercised and alive and used for the blessing of others. I want the kind of muscular faith that really can move mountains!

Every day I want to take in what God is offering to me, but every day I also want to work out with Holy Spirit - to be open to being stretched and exercised and aching and uncomfortable as she directs me to be where I need to be and to do what I need to do.

**[Rev Rachael's Bible Study on Genesis 32: 22-31](https://youtu.be/gLmLJA3EC_A)**

### **Jacob Wrestles With God**

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

### **Reflection**

Not all human relationships are easy. We don't get on with everyone we meet, and sometimes we even fall out with members of our own family. And there are times when we also struggle with ourselves – with who we are and who we want to be, with things we wish we hadn't done and things we would dearly love

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to do. This story of Jacob wrestling at Jabbok says something to us about the human struggle with God, and our struggle with ourselves. Even in the middle of our struggles – with God, with ourselves and with others – God’s love and grace remain.

Jacob believed that he was special, that he was better than his brother and that he deserved what Esau was entitled to. So he felt entitled to take advantage of everyone around him. He tricked his father and his brother in order to get what he wanted, what he thought was due to him. By the time we get to this passage, Jacob has become rich and successful, and with his family has started on a return journey home. He hasn’t seen his brother Esau for many years, but he has learnt that he will meet him the following day and he is probably at the least anxious, if not terrified. He’s spent his whole life deceiving people, but his tricks aren’t working any more. Jacob sends his family ahead across the stream, and he prepares to spend a sleepless night alone. But this is not to be – he wrestles with a “man” until daybreak.

This raises lots of questions. Who is the man? Where does he come from? Why won’t he tell Jacob his name? From where does he get the authority to bless and change Jacob’s name? Why does Jacob’s new name become the name of the special family of God – Israel? Why do they fight in the first place? Who starts it?

It sounds as though the pair are physically fairly equally matched. They wrestle for a long time, and the man only gets away at the cost of giving Jacob a blessing. And actually, despite Jacob’s strength, he can’t wrestle from the man the one thing he wants – the man’s name and the key to his identity.

A couple of things stand out in particular. Firstly, Jacob’s new name shows something of his character. The name Israel comes from the verb sarah which means to strive or to fight. Jacob – Israel – is a fighter. He fights to get his father’s blessing. He fights to get the wife he wants. He is persistent.

Secondly, Jacob clearly sees the man he wrestles as God, or at least a representative of God. We don’t know why – the text only says he wrestles a man. People have suggested that it might be because the man seems to display superhuman strength, but this doesn’t really work as Jacob is a match. It’s also been suggested that it might be because of the manner of the blessing that is given at daybreak. But if we look earlier in Genesis to the story of Isaac’s blessing of Jacob, that blessing seems to be much more detailed and wordy.

Perhaps the answer lies in the new name. Who else but God would have known Jacob well enough to call him Israel? Who else would have been so bold as to call him “fighter with God”? Who else would have blessed a fighter with God – with the implication being that they have special and continuing relationship?

In this wrestling match it seems that God holds up a mirror to Jacob. In it Jacob sees his past, he sees himself as flawed and sinful. He knows how he deceived his brother and father. And he knows he didn’t part from his father-in-law on good terms. But in it he also sees the face of God. He acknowledges this in naming the place Peniel – the face of God. Jacob shows us the connection between our understanding of ourselves as we really are, and our recognition of God as God truly is. And in this we see what lies at the heart of the gospel. Jacob learns that God knows exactly who he is but loves and accepts him anyway. And the miracle is the gospel – that God meets us as we are and where we are. God calls us by name and saves us in order to transform us.

Jacob is left with a new name and something else besides. He is left with a hip injury that causes him to limp – a lifelong physical reminder of his encounter with God.

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If we read on to Jacob's encounter with Esau the message is reinforced. Jacob expects Esau's anger and vengeance, but it doesn't come. In Esau's reaction to him, Jacob sees the face of God again. Jacob discovers grace in the face of the brother he has cheated and tricked and always considered inferior. The blessing Jacob receives from God is not for himself alone. It's not given so that Jacob can have privilege over others, but for the benefit of others. And God keeps on turning up, not in the strong and victorious, but in those who seem weak, and in those who have been defeated and rejected.

Life is full of conflicts and struggles. We experience hurt and wrong and injustice, and we also inflict it on others. But God knows us intimately and exactly as we are, and God still accepts us and loves us.

We're left with a challenge too. Can we be people who reflect the face of God? And are we open to see the face of God in others, even in the faces of rivals and enemies?

For further thought...

Read Jacob's full story from Genesis 25:19. Imagine yourself in his position.

In what ways can you identify with him?

What makes you feel different to him?

Think of any times in your life when you have struggled with people or situations.

How have things been resolved?

When have you encountered the face of God in a situation of struggle and difficulty?

When have you seen the face of God in someone you have considered difficult, problematic or even an enemy?

### **Peace begins with smile: - Guess with Jess**



Did you guess where I was last week: **Brooklands**

- 1 This Cambridgeshire village and church where the setting of a series of books and TV series whose title is the same as the village name.
- 2 Books were written by James Runcie
- 3 The name of the nearby meadows is in the 1969 song by the rock band Pink Floyd.

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