



Sunday 27th September 2020 Notices, Reflections, Harvest Service



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Toothill Church website:

www.toothillchurch.org.uk

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.

Services for this Sunday

Conference all Harvest Service - Farming

Toothill Church: a conference call service will be led by David Hoar

To join the service telephone: 020 3321 5238

When asked for code: Type – 367 633 661#

Calls open at 10.15 for 10.30 Service. All are welcome to join us.

Service sheets for this service will be sent out on the Friday or Saturday before.

Local URC Emmanuel Church Rev Gerald England

<https://www.emmanuelhaydonwick.org.uk/>

National URC Service on line dailydevotions@urc.org.uk

Dear Friends, Sunday's service is led by the Rev'd Branwen Rees who serves as a minister in East Wales. Hymns include Caroline Noel's At the Name of Jesus, Graham Kendrick's Meekness and Majesty, David Mansell's Jesus is Lord, Creation's Voice Proclaims It, and Marty Haugen's Bring Forth the Kingdom.

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 Andy

The Rev'd Andy Braunston

Coordinator, Daily Devotions from the URC

Bible Study Wednesday

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#

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



From Rev Capt Clive Deverell "Hidden Stories for Remembrance"

Dear All, "This year we would really like to introduce the children to some of the often forgotten stories that surround conflict. Can you help us, have you a story about a relative or friend who maybe was a nurse serving with our forces. Also have you relatives who married for instance an Italian or German prisoner of war. Please help us to tell these stories. If you have a story, please contact Clive or Gayle as soon as possible." With thanks. Clive

Notice of Partnership AGM and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Parish of West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze

The Partnership AGM and Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held virtually, over Zoom and by telephone call on Tuesday 13th October 2020 at 7.30pm.

<https://zoom.us/j/92014598920?pwd=QmYyTElOM2ZZZzhCazY3R1JGbxZuUT09>

or from the Zoom app, use **Meeting ID: 920 1459 8920, Passcode 874221**

Or for sound only, telephone 0330 088 5830 use the same Meeting ID and Passcode (expect charges after one hour, redial)

Reading for Harvest: Matthew 13:24-33

4 Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer sowing good seed in his field; 25 but one night as he slept, his enemy came and sowed thistles among the wheat. 26 When the crop began to grow, the thistles grew too.

27 "The farmer's men came and told him, 'Sir, the field where you planted that choice seed is full of thistles!'

28 "'An enemy has done it,' he exclaimed.

"'Shall we pull out the thistles?' they asked.

29 "'No,' he replied. 'You'll hurt the wheat if you do. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and I will tell the reapers to sort out the thistles and burn them, and put the wheat in the barn.'"

31-32 Here is another of his illustrations: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a tiny mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds but becomes the largest of plants, and grows into a tree where birds can come and find shelter."

33 He also used this example:

"The Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a woman making bread. She takes a measure of flour and mixes in the yeast until it permeates every part of the dough."

Prayer

Seeing you in the work of creation; we praise you!

Hearing you in your Son's stories; we praise you!

Feeling the presence of your Spirit; we praise you!

You give to us from the goodness of creation. - Yet we look to the world for what it gives us.

You speak to us in parables of change, - yet when we listen we are slow to shift.

You reach out to us through your Spirit,- Yet we ignore you and the call of conscience.

Forgive us, we pray.

Make us thankful for the good things of harvest.

Move us to share them with others, seeking the best for all of your creation. Amen

Reading Psalm 65

O God in Zion, we wait before you in silent praise, and thus fulfil our vow. And because you answer prayer, all mankind will come to you with their requests. 3 Though sins fill our hearts, you forgive them all. 4 How greatly to be envied are those you have chosen to come and live with you within the holy tabernacle courts! What joys await us among all the good things there. 5 With dread deeds and awesome power you

will defend us from our enemies, O God who saves us. You are the only hope of all mankind throughout the world and far away upon the sea.

6 He formed the mountains by his mighty strength. 7 He quiets the raging oceans and all the world's clamour. 8 In the farthest corners of the earth the glorious acts of God shall startle everyone. The dawn and sunset shout for joy! 9 He waters the earth to make it fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry! He prepares the earth for his people and sends them rich harvests of grain. 10 He waters the furrows with abundant rain. Showers soften the earth, melting the clods and causing seeds to sprout across the land. 11-12 Then he crowns it all with green, lush pastures in the wilderness; hillsides blossom with joy. 13 The pastures are filled with flocks of sheep, and the valleys are carpeted with grain. All the world shouts with joy and sings.

Prayer

You visit the earth, watering it, enriching it. So we thank you for abundant water,
Praying... for those who live with drought.

... for those overwhelmed with flood

... for those who bring help;

May creation shout and sing for joy.

You crown the year with fruitfulness

So we thank you for abundant crops,

Praying... for those who transport food from the fields

... for those who distribute it to the shops

... for those who set the price and those who bear the cost:

May creation shout and sing for joy.

You cover meadows with flocks and fields with grain,

So we thank you for all the farmers,

Praying... for farmers, dependent on soil and sea,

...for fair treatment of all your creatures;

...for future generations who take up this work

May creation shout and sing for joy.

Amen



Rachel Dowling reflection of Sunday 13 September on Matthew 18

September is a time of change. In the rhythm of our lives there is a comfort in ringing the changes. We feel the summer coming to an end as the evenings start to draw in, the mornings are cooler and the trees have a tinge of autumn. In the Methodist Church September marks the beginning of the church year, with new ministers in some churches. Even if we don't have children going back to school ourselves, with new shoes, oversized uniform and huge backpacks, we see them walking to and from school and hear about new teachers, old friends and this year, new rules and different ways of working, At work, there is a 'back to school feel' even if I haven't actually gone back to work. People are returning from holidays, mostly somewhere in the UK, and many are freed from trying to home school and hold meetings at the same time. You might have been blackberry picking, thought about apple crumble and custard.



At the moment we also have a lot of uncertainty in our lives, the sort of change that makes us feel uncomfortable. What is the latest on Coronavirus? What are the rules that we need to follow today? We peer into the future and we don't know what is around the corner. We don't even know what might be true tomorrow. Are things getting better in Swindon, or are they getting worse? When can we go back to church? You might be worried

about your health, or the health of your family and friends? In your family there may be worries about jobs, paying bills, the rent, what the future holds.

Our reading from Matthew 18 gives us the opportunity to reflect on God's grace and mercy right here where we are in our time and place. We are also challenged to consider our response to God's grace and mercy, not in a theoretical way, but very practically.

Thinking about our reading an alternative title to the parable of the unforgiving servant might be 'Things go wrong.' A better title might be, 'Things mostly go wrong.'

A small group of us have been meeting virtually each week to study the Bible over the last couple of months. We have taken it in turns to choose a bible passage to look at in more detail. It just happens that we have looked at more Old Testament readings than New Testament and only this week we reflected that the background story of much of the Old Testament is that the Israelites got distracted, they lost their focus on God and turned to other things. Then there was a reason to go back to God, often because God reached out to them, and the Israelites realised their mistake, often because a lone voice, such as a prophet pointed it out. The Israelites repented and turned back to following God, realising that God had been there and for them all along.

In our reading Peter checks with Jesus about forgiving someone else. He wasn't been mean by suggesting that he might forgive someone seven times. Seven wasn't just a good answer; it was a great answer. The world was made in six days and on the seventh God rested. There is a sense of completeness and fulfilment in the number seven. But Jesus goes way beyond what Peter could imagine. He says we should forgive seventy seven times. Jesus isn't saying this much forgiveness and no more. This is intended to be a mind blowing answer – a number like winning the Euro millions.

And as I have been thinking about the reading this week and listening to the week's events unfold, I have thought that in saying this Jesus is recognising the reality of the world that we live in. Things go mostly wrong. We don't do the right thing and others don't do the right thing to us. We aren't going to get things wrong seven times, we are going to get things wrong a mind blowing number of times.

In the story that Jesus told there is a lot that goes wrong, There is a significant debt to a King, a debt that just can't be repaid. The right thing to do in such circumstances would be for the man, his wife and family to become slaves and for their property to be sold to repay the debt. The debt is a vast sum, Jesus describes it as ten thousand talents . It would take a regular worker about twenty years to earn just one talent, so ten thousand talents is another of those Euro Millions amounts. Things had gone wrong for this man in a spectacular way. He offers to put things right, asking for more time. But the man would not be capable of putting this much wrong right.

This is the story of our lives; this is the story of our humanity. Again, and again we get things wrong. We make bad choices; we get distracted and before we know it our lives have gone down the wrong path. We damage relationships with others instead of building them. We get to a place where we can't sort things out on our own. We are not capable of putting our wrong right.

We hear people talk about karma – that somehow in life you get the reward that you deserve because 'what goes round comes round'. That's not what we believe as Christians.

As Christians we believe in God's grace and mercy; that we get what we don't deserve.

What the man in the story deserved was loss of his property, loss of his family, slavery and destitution. What he got was cancellation of the debt, that Euro million size debt, in full. Jesus is telling us that this is exactly what God is like. We can know that whatever has gone wrong in our lives, whatever we have done, God calls us by our name, he loves us and calls us to newness of life, through Jesus Christ. Amazing grace. And not just once, not just a special seven times, but a mind blowingly spectacular number of times.

Thank God that he restores and sustains the universe and restores and sustains us.

So there are practical implications because we are blessed with God's grace and mercy. In Jesus' story the man whose gigantic debt had been cancelled picks on someone who owes him a much smaller amount (about 3 months' wages). Jesus does not hold back in condemning him for this action. As a story it is a pretty straightforward one to understand. Perhaps a lot harder to bring into our lives, where things might go mostly wrong because of the actions of others.

At no point does Jesus suggest that we ignore the wrong that might have been done to us, that we pretend that the debt hasn't happened. This isn't a story about justice. Jesus isn't suggesting that we should be ignoring the consequences of wrongdoing. This is a story about our common humanity, where we are all mostly wrong and we are called to show grace and mercy to our neighbour.

In our current time of uncertainty may we be filled with a living hope because of God's grace and mercy to us and may we share that grace and mercy with those that we live with and those that we meet. Amen.

Rev. Rachael's Reflections - Camino <https://youtu.be/znNgolqobJ8>

One of the most profoundly impactful experiences of my life was walking the Camino de Santiago two and a half years ago. It's still something that I think about every day, and actually the longing to return is growing stronger. Last week I even dreamed I was walking in Spain again! And I've been reading lots of



books about it recently, mainly written by people who have wanted to share their own experience. Although the experience is a highly personal one, and it will be different for everyone who undertakes any kind of pilgrimage, there is so much that resonates with me when reading these books that I become quite emotional; and although I am not usually a person who does a lot of crying, I think I cried every day that I walked the Camino, and the books have

given me access to those healing and transformative tears again. As the ache to be back on the Camino becomes more insistent I find I am trying to tap into it in some way at regular points throughout each day. Some of it I will only be able to rediscover when I am actually walking it again, like the feeling of only having one small rucksack that contained everything I needed for a month on the Way, or the feeling of getting up every morning and knowing that all I had to do that day was walk, or even experiencing the daily miracle of my body. Every night I went to bed with feet so sore that I thought I'd never be able to walk the next day, and that pain in my feet and legs would wake me up throughout the night until the early hours of the morning when suddenly it had gone and I could sleep peacefully for a couple of hours before I had to get up. And every morning I thanked God that my body had somehow miraculously restored itself and my feet didn't hurt and I could get my boots on and manage to walk another 22 miles before collapsing in an albergue and thinking I'd never be able to manage another step tomorrow! Some of those feelings just can't be recreated at home!

Graham often wonders if we wasted our Camino experience. He thinks that we came home with good intentions about how we were going to live our lives, but somehow two and a half years on nothing much seems to have changed. We talked about changing our priorities, and we wondered how and where we were focusing on the wrong things, and we resolved that we wanted our life together to be marked with simplicity and unity and clarity of focus. As diaries look complicated and there are too many meetings and we're running to timetables not of our own making much of the time I can appreciate how Graham feels. But I don't think we've wasted the experience at all. Things may not be as different as I would like, but the Camino was certainly a preparation for lockdown which has been like a stay-at-home pilgrimage - an



inner pilgrimage, or a pilgrimage of the heart as some people have described it. And the Camino has given me a greater realisation of the need to keep moving on every day. For me this isn't about a sense of progress, but it is about understanding that every day I am trying to keep on journeying with Jesus, and so I need to keep looking and listening and wondering. And I need to keep an eye on how much I'm carrying in my rucksack. What's really important, what's essential, but what weighs me down? What am I hanging on to for comfort or security? I've got a renewed hunger to learn as much as I can, about God and about myself, and this seems to result in a drive or compulsion to interrogate and reflect on every thing that happens, every thought that pops into my head, every conversation, every experience. It may sound exhausting but actually I find it invigorating, particularly when I look back and can see how far I've travelled and how I think I've changed and grown.

I'm part of a pilgrim discussion group on Facebook, and at the beginning of last week someone asked the question - what are the three essential items you would take with you on your Camino? Some of the responses went along the lines of good boots, or Compeed plasters for blisters, or a certain guidebook, but one particular comment caught my attention. This person wrote that the three essential items to take on the Camino are an open mind, a free spirit, and acceptance. These have been going round in my head all week, alongside all my other Camino thoughts and memories and longings. They're not just essential for anyone wanting to undertake a physical pilgrimage, but they're essential I think to all of us as we follow a pilgrimage through life, and equally necessary for those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus. To be able to give and receive as much as we can in our experiences of life and faith, we all need these three things - an open mind, a free spirit, and acceptance.

A number of years ago a friend in Cornwall was filling out an application form in order to take on a volunteering role in a local Christian bookshop. She got to the question, "What do you hope to learn from this experience?" and said to me, "What do you think I should put here?" "That's easy," I said to her, "Just put, 'as much as I possibly can'!" Although it was in some ways quite an off-the-cuff remark, I've never forgotten it because I think it was actually one of my more profound moments! We all need to be open to learn as much as we can. We need to be open and willing to make mistakes and not afraid to get things wrong sometimes. But we also need to be willing and open to admit that we have been made a mistake, and to adapt and change and move on. If our minds are closed then it usually follows that our hearts are also closed. We start to make distinctions about who is worthy of our care and attention, or worse, who is worthy of God's love and grace. We consider ourselves (and anyone who shares our thoughts and pinions) to be right, and everyone else to be wrong. We need open minds to see where God is at work. We need open minds to be able to meet Christ in the other. We need open minds to see where injustice, oppression and exclusion are rife and to be able to stand against them. A few centuries ago, slavery was an accepted norm. It was not uncommon, and people even found justification for it in the Bible. It took a number of brave and open minded people to see that this was wrong, and to stand strong in their conviction that despite the apparent biblical backing this practice was the complete antithesis of God's rule of love, equality and inclusion. And so to today, the issues change but the need for people to be open minded and willing to engage with the other and to accept and welcome difference is undiminished.



I think a free spirit goes along with being open minded in part. One of my favourite artworks is the Great Wave by the 18th century Japanese artist Hokusai. This picture always makes me think of the Holy Spirit. The wave dominates the picture, but if you look closely you can see a couple of little boats out on the sea, caught up in the wave. They look fragile and precarious, but they are not destroyed. I believe that we're called to ride the wave of the Holy Spirit who cannot be tamed

or contained by us with our narrow opinions and vision of what we think she should be doing. I believe that the Spirit is a force and power that cannot be contained; she will have her way; she does not need our permission, and we resist her to our own detriment. But if we choose to be open to the wild roaming of the Spirit who goes wherever she wills and dwells wherever she finds a welcome, we will find blessing. The adventure can seem frightening as well as exhilarating, we might think we won't cope, we'll go under. But the Spirit bears us up with her love and her energy, and if we choose to be open to live in the wildness of the Spirit and to join in her joyful dance we will experience a freedom and boldness in our living that only she can give.

Acceptance is also important - acceptance of ourselves as works in progress, as yet unfinished by the Spirit; acceptance of God who shows us the way in Jesus; acceptance and respect of each other as fellow pilgrims all trying to follow in Jesus' footsteps and all with good intentions; acceptance that sometimes life will be good but at other times it will be hard, and yet whether it is joyous or sad, God is always faithful to us and is always with us. But in the light of the things I've already mentioned - the open mind and the free spirit - acceptance doesn't mean a passive forbearance of everything that is going on around us. We are not called to accept hatred. We are not called to tolerate injustice. We are not called to keep silent when others are oppressed. We are not called to accept any kind of exclusion, where some are left out on the grounds of their colour, ethnicity, gender, age or sexuality. It's not acceptable in any part of society and it's not acceptable in the church, and we are called to stand against all forms of discrimination, injustice and oppression. We're often blinkered by our own privilege or by long-held beliefs that have become very comfortable to us. But we're asked to accept the challenge to step outside our comfort zone, and to accept that God's work is not confined to us or contained by us.

Today I can't pack my rucksack with less than 6kg of gear and set off on the road to Santiago, much as I would dearly love to! But I can choose what I will carry today, and I can commit once more to the path of following Jesus. I can't leave all familiarity behind today and open myself up to extreme physical exertion, pain, freedom, joy and tears on the Way of St James. But I can embrace all that today will bring and seek to find a deeper experience of Jesus and his love for me within it. So my prayer for myself today is that God will give me an open mind and heart, to see where God is at work and to know what God wants me to know; and for a willingness to let the Spirit live freely in me, encouraging me to step on and step out, embracing the life she offers; and for the wisdom to know what I need to accept today and what I need to challenge, and the courage and boldness to walk this uncomfortable path, knowing that with each step I take my intention to draw closer to Jesus is my strongest desire and focus.

Sight Loss Friendly Church

Hello, I'm writing from the Sight Loss Friendly Church team at Torch Trust for the Blind, a Christian charity dedicated to enabling blind and partially sighted people to live fulfilling Christian lives. We do this by producing large print, braille and audio versions of the Bible and other leading Christian publications, and by empowering churches to include people with sight loss in every aspect of their ministry.

We are inviting churches to join us for a Sight Loss Friendly Church Taster session on Zoom. In the session, which should last just over half an hour, participants will learn more about sight loss and how they and their churches can help people with sight loss feel more involved in church life. The next few sessions are taking place on:

Tuesday 29 September 2:00 PM

Wednesday 30 September 7:00 PM

Tuesday 27 October 2:00 PM

Wednesday 28 October 7:00 PM

Tuesday 17 November 2:00 PM

Tuesday 24 November 7:00 PM

Thursday 26 November 2:00 PM

To register interest, participants should email slfc@torchtrust.org

I would be extremely grateful if you could help us to spread the word about these sessions around your Synod. Please let me know if there is anything you need from us in order to do this effectively. In the meantime, I have attached a digital version of our introductory flier which might offer some background to interested churches, and there is more information on our website at www.sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk
Many thanks in advance for any help you can offer.

Best wishes,

Matthew Horspool

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Peace begins with smile from Jess. - Words lost from Childhood



Mergatroyd! Do you remember that word? Would you believe the spell-checker did not recognize the word Mergatroyd?
"Heavens to Mergatroyd!"

The other day a not so elderly (I say 75) lady said something to her son about driving a **Jalopy;** and he looked at her quizzically and said,

"What the heck is a Jalopy?"

He had never heard of the word jalopy!

She knew she was old ... But not that old.

Well, I hope you are **Hunky Dory** after you read this and chuckle.

We'd put on our best **bib and tucker**