

## Newsletter 26

I write this on a beautiful summer morning, and the day that Katie and Nigel will be married at St. John's church. We thank God for this lovely day and ask his blessing on Katie and Nigel, wishing the very best for them in their marriage.

This is a time of joys and sorrows in the parish. We pray for all those who have lost loved ones recently. We think especially of Janet and her family as they prepare for Bob's funeral service, which, at his and the family's request, will be a celebration of his life – 'please don't feel you have to wear black' they say. More details of the service to be held at Holy Trinity Church on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June at 2.15 pm are given separately. Please book as soon as possible via the usual channels if you would like to attend as numbers will be restricted to comply with Covid guidelines.

We were also sad to hear of the death of Marcus Preston who had become a regular attender at Sunday services before lockdown. His funeral will be at Holy Trinity at 10 am on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June followed by a private family cremation.

Last Sunday we presented Philippa with the gift of a cheque to thank her for her 5 years as our Children and Families worker. We wish her well in her new role working for the Methodist circuit. We are grateful that she will continue to worship in our parish and to take her part in the worshipping life of the church.

This Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June the Litany of Reconciliation will take place at St. John's at 12 noon outside by the war memorial. All are welcome to this short act of worship and prayer for peace and reconciliation.

We look forward to welcoming Rev'd Canon Mark Brown, Area Dean of Ecclesall and Priest-in-Charge of All Saints, Ecclesall, to preach and preside at our Sunday morning Eucharist at St. John's on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June.

There will be a PCC meeting at 7.30 on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June, which will include ongoing plans as we go through the process of looking for a new priest in charge of the parish. Our prayers are with the wardens as they manage the vacancy.

TRIO has been published and as always, we thank all involved in producing and delivering it. Please look at the Calendar on page 23 and take note of the dates and venues of services as the pattern for July is different.

Warm wishes

Angie

## SERMON FOR TRINITY 2. 13 June 2021 10am at St. John's

*Readings: Ezekiel 17.22-24; 2 Corinthians 5.6-10 (11-13), 14-17; Mark 4.26-34*

### INTRODUCTION

Sermons should be about God and about 10 minutes! So said a retired priest I know.

These readings are about God - more precisely, about the kingdom of God.  
And this sermon? I haven't timed it!

### WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

In the Ezekiel reading, it is about **all creation knowing that God is the Lord, and is all powerful.**

"All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish".

This reading was a message of hope for the exiles. It was written sometime between 571 and 593 BC. A few years later, the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and deported a number of Juda's leading citizens – Ezekiel among them. The reading encourages the exiles that God has the power to make the weak strong – "I make high the low tree .... And the dry tree flourish". This is echoed in Mark's gospel, where the small mustard seed grows into a large and sturdy bush able to give shelter.

In Mark's gospel, it is about **the kingdom, or dominion of GOD as opposed to the kingdom, or dominion, of MAN.** In the first century, power and dominion belonged to Caesar. Early Christians preached that Caesar's dominion has been overtaken by the dominion of God.

**It is also about the grace of God.** The first parable in the reading from Mark speaks of our dependence on God for growth, in the same way that a seed mysteriously grows because it is provided with all that it needs for growth – it cannot make itself grow. In the same way, the mustard seed becomes a large plant. One commentator puts it this way, "We marvel that birds come to nest in this spacious dwelling. So shall the reign of God be. We, like the farmer, do not understand how the sprouting and the growing of such a reality take place. Yet it becomes a harvest of life, and the tree from the seed spreads our branches to be a place of rest and song and abundance". What a wonderful image – especially on this first Sunday when we have a choir singing in our service!

I love the imagery in Mark's gospel of the kingdom of God being like a small mustard seed that grows into a shrub with large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. It echoes the 'noble cedar' in the Ezekiel passage – "Under it, every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind". (v.23)

It makes me imagine a whole ecosystem in the tree.

This involves diversity and interdependence, the whole ecosystem living in balance, all having a part to play, all equally valuable.

We heard from Springwatch how things can go wrong if something affects a balanced ecosystem.

This year, for the first time, we had no blue tits nesting in our nest box – and we were not the only ones. Others reported a much poorer survival rate of the young. This was explained by the cold spell of weather which slowed down the appearance of buds on trees, therefore there was less food for the caterpillars to live on, so fewer caterpillars at the time the adult blue tits were searching for food for their young.

This interdependence is playing out in our world today. In the G7 meeting, countries see the value of working collaboratively for the good of humanity. The UN Climate conference to be held in Glasgow in November this year will aim to work together for the good of the planet. In the Covid pandemic, we have realised that we are interdependent and this included not only working internationally to develop vaccines, but also to administer them and share them around the world. This is all part of bringing about ‘the kingdom of God’ in loving each other.

### **WHAT DOES LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD MEAN FOR US HERE AND NOW?**

The reading from 2 Corinthians 5 gives some general guidance for how we live our daily lives.

We walk by faith, not by sight (v.7)

We make it our aim to please God (v.9)

Believing that in Christ, because of his death and resurrection, “everything old has passed away .... Everything has become new! (v.17)

These are hopeful truths to live by.

So, may we experience life in the kingdom of God as living in the shelter of a large tree, “a place of rest and song and abundance”.

**AMEN**