



## THE FRIDAY EMAIL

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020



### The Friday Thought:

As I sat down this morning to write this Friday Thought, the beautiful low autumn sun had better ideas. It shone through my study window, straight into my eyes. With the prospect of being blinded for the next hour or so as the sun tracked its way slowly across the sky, I suddenly found myself paralysed in my task.

It seemed, in a way, to sum up my current position: I've arrived in the parish as your new vicar but, due to the pandemic, I'm still not yet able to get out there and operate fully because so much is not happening.

So, as I sat there, blinded by the sun, was I, in words from this Sunday's first reading, going to simply rest complacently on my dregs?

Of course, at this moment in time, I'm not the only one to be frustrated. And, let's be honest, so many people have got *far* greater worries than whether they're going to be able to see their computer screen for the next hour or so. There are those, for example, worried about jobs and livelihoods which are disappearing fast. There are those who are struggling with 'Long Covid' – the lingering, debilitating aftereffects of the virus. There are those who are frustrated by not being able to see and care for ill or grieving relatives.

I was listening to the news at lunchtime and to the heart-breaking story of a daughter who hasn't been able to see her mother with dementia in any meaningful way for months. As a result, she's having to watch from afar as her mother's health and awareness slowly decline. It's, of course, a complex issue; it's crucial to ensure Covid-19 doesn't enter that particular care home, affecting not only the daughter's mother but the other residents and staff too. But this and so many other stories of people's lives forced into a state of paralysis are just one tragic repercussion of this current pandemic.

Of course, many of those who are finding themselves in limbo at this time aren't just sitting around and waiting for the world and humanity to sort itself out. Many are actively seeking other options and solutions, or campaigning to improve situations. Afterall, whilst the current time might be limiting and frustrating, if we simply sit on our hands and wait, we're

just allowing the days to drift by, and, before you know it, days have become weeks, weeks have become months, and months have become a whole year gone from the whole number of our days.

This Sunday's readings are an encouragement to us, no matter the circumstance – particularly where God's work is at stake – to get on with things and use our resources, gifts and talents wisely. The first reading, from the book of the Jewish prophet Zephaniah, written 8,000 or so years ago, doesn't mince its words. God won't look favourably on those who rest on their laurels and haven't got their house (and faith) in order.

Meanwhile, in the parable of the talents, Jesus is quite clear in calling upon us to use our resources - and, by implication, gifts and skills - wisely and effectively to bring about the goodness of God's kingdom. A talent in Jesus' time was no small amount of money. Indeed, it was the largest unit of currency and represented a weight of approximately 80 pounds of silver. So some scholars suggest a talent could have been worth as much as £½ million in today's money. The message is clear: God has given us precious resources, gifts and skills; we will be held to account if with squander them. Complacency or lukewarm commitment are not an option. So we're called to take risks for the sake of God's good news; not only for the good of our own future but for the good of others too.

It seems, then, that even when the easy option might be to sit back and wait, we're called to find ways to progress. Of course, that depends on our circumstances. One person's active might be to energetically remodel their current situation so as to create a new, brighter tomorrow for themselves or to campaign enthusiastically to relieve the lot of another person. On the other hand, another person's active might be to live without regret, in the mindful moment, simply opening themselves up in quiet thought and prayer to the presence of the One Beyond Ourselves.

As for me? Well, despite the limitations this pandemic has placed on the early part of my ministry here with you, we've been working busily behind the scenes to get a number of things set up. And, rather than being able to have numerous short chats with you all after church over coffee, over the past couple of months, where possible, I've been visiting individuals in their own homes; sitting with you for an hour or two, and getting to know your stories and your passions. It's, of course, taking a lot longer to meet everybody. But the silver lining is that the relationships I'm forming with many of you are already a lot deeper than they would have been under normal circumstances.

And what about this morning? Well, you'll be pleased to hear that I didn't rest on my dregs this morning either. Taking advantage of the beautiful sunshine and the calm conditions, I got out in the garden for a couple of hours (after all, it is my day off!) to rake up the many leaves that have been covering the Vicarage lawn in recent days. So now, as I do finally put my fingers to the keyboard, not only does the view out of my study window no longer blind me but it's far more tidy too!

Yours in Christ,  
Fr Simon

### [Sunday's readings:](#)

Be silent before the Lord God!

For the day of the Lord is at hand;  
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,

he has consecrated his guests.  
At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the people  
who rest complacently on their dregs,  
those who say in their hearts,  
'The Lord will not do good,  
nor will he do harm.'  
Their wealth shall be plundered,  
and their houses laid waste.  
Though they build houses,  
they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the Lord is near,  
near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,  
the warrior cries aloud there.  
That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people  
that they shall walk like the blind;  
because they have sinned against the Lord,  
their blood shall be poured out like dust,  
and their flesh like dung.  
Neither their silver nor their gold  
will be able to save them  
on the day of the Lord's wrath;  
in the fire of his passion  
the whole earth shall be consumed;  
for a full, a terrible end  
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

*The Book of Zephaniah, chapter 1, verses 7 & 12-18*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me

two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

*St Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25, verses 14-30*

### **[Details of Sunday's 9.30am service to be streamed on our Facebook page & website:](#)**

- ❖ President and preacher: Fr Simon (Vicar)
- ❖ Reader: Becky Burton
- ❖ Intercessor: Di Kitson (Lay Reader)
- ❖ Organ voluntary: Berceuse (Louis Vierne)
- ❖ Processional hymn: Praise, my soul, the King of heaven (tune: Goss)
- ❖ Gradual hymn: Take my life and let it be (tune: Nottingham)
- ❖ Offertory hymn: O Jesus, I have promised (Wolvercote)
- ❖ Communion motet: Ave verum (W.A. Mozart)
- ❖ Recessional hymn: God is working his purpose out (tune: Benson)
- ❖ Organ voluntary: Carillon de Westminster (Louis Vierne)

### **[Intercessions for this week:](#)**

#### **For the world-wide Church**

- ❖ Bishop Alan, Bishop of St Albans
- ❖ Archbishop Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury
- ❖ Bishop Michael, Suffragan Bishop of Hertford
- ❖ The Venerable Janet Mackenzie, Archdeacon of Hertford
- ❖ In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer: the Church of Ceylon, and its bishops:  
the Rt Revd Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabey (Bishop of Colombo)  
and the Rt Revd Keerthisiri Fernando (Bishop of Kurunegala)
- ❖ The Ash and Quin Valleys Group Ministry

#### **For the world**

- ❖ Those who have died or are suffering in body, mind or spirit as a result of the pandemic
- ❖ Those who are working to relieve suffering; for key-workers, scientists and leaders
- ❖ For just and peaceful governance throughout the world
- ❖ Those who are being persecuted for their faith

#### **For Great St Mary's and our community of Sawbridgeworth**

- Sunday: Heron Close & Bonks Hill
- Monday: Cambridge Road & Walnut Tree Avenue
- Tuesday: Parkway & Cedar Close
- Wednesday: Chalks Avenue & Coney Green

Thursday: Hazel Gardens & Moorlands Reach  
Friday: Cherry Gardens & Marlands  
Saturday: Church Walk, Church Crescent, & Forebury Crescent

### **For the sick and bereaved**

### **For the recently departed**

- ❖ Vera Boone
- ❖ Margaret Leighton
- ❖ David Needham

### **For those we remember at the anniversary of their death**

- ❖ Marjorie Stone

### **Notices:**

#### **Services**

Due to the government restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are unable to meet for public worship until at least the beginning of December. However, the government is allowing priests, acting alone, to broadcast from their churches. Therefore, this Sunday, Fr Simon will be on his own in Great St Mary's and will live stream the Eucharist at 9.30am. You will be able to join the live stream from 9.15am via [the church website](#) or on the church's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/638305163631527>); not, because of technical eccentricities, on our usual YouTube page.

#### **Open for Private Prayer**

Despite the government restrictions, we can still open Great St Mary's for private prayer. Thank you to everyone who continues to enable this to happen by church-sitting. Great St Mary's will therefore be open for private prayer at the following times:

Monday:	10am till 12pm
Tuesday:	10am till 12pm
Wednesday:	10am till 12pm
Thursday:	2pm till 4pm
Friday:	10am till 12pm
Saturday :	10am till 12pm
Sunday:	2pm till 4pm

#### **Christmas tree and nativity crib**

Would you be able to spend a couple of hours in the week before Christmas to church-sit?

From Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December until Christmas Eve, we would like to open the church for longer during the day so that, as well as private prayer, people have the opportunity to visit our nativity crib and to bring along a decoration to dress a community Christmas tree or to add a prayer to its branches. If you are able to offer a couple of hours during that important week for our church and community, please contact Di Kitson.

#### **Prayer List**

The Sunday prayer list - for those we know who are sick and suffering - has been recently reviewed. Please email us if someone would like to be included on the prayer list. If possible, that person's consent must be sought and received to be included on the list.



## News from Spellbrook

On Armistice Day, the entire school was able to come together outside in our meadow-garden to reflect on Remembrance. This was the first time the entire school had been able to be together this term due to the Covid restrictions, and fortunately the autumn weather was fine. The children prepared for this day by painting poppies and remembrance images on pebbles, and bringing them into school. Fr Simon's welcome and introduction was followed by a reading of the poem, 'In Flanders Fields'. The children then very thoughtfully placed their pebbles and observed a minute's silence before we closed with a prayer. All of the children - even the youngest from the Nursery and Reception class - were able to show respect in their quiet manner and stillness.

## Content for the Newsletter

If you have a notice for the Friday Email, please let Fr Simon or Anthony know by lunchtime on Thursday.

Thank you for your continued support of Great St Mary's.

## Contact us

Fr Simon Vivian (Vicar)

Revd Debbie Hore (Associate Minister)

Di Kitson (Lay Reader)

Anthony Heard (Churchwarden)

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