

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

30th July 2023: 8th Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

We have had two fundraising events recently, raising over £350 at the Children's Society Coffee Morning and over £500 for foodbanks at the West Wickham Choir Concert. Thank you to all those who took part and helped with these events, showing our **compassion** for those in need, as well as our **commercial** ability to raise funds.

For those at St Francis' who remember Terry Leggatt (a prisoner who used to visit us from Bethlem Hospital), I have a letter from him which I will put on the noticeboard in the church. He has now been moved to an open prison and he thanks all those who have been praying for him since he left us in 2019. This has kept him going and shows how inclusive our **congregation** can be.

This week we have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church, when **Mike and Liz Jeggo** will be visiting. There is also a **baptism service** at 1pm in St Francis' Church, when Elysia Lawrence will be baptised. All are welcome.

Next **Sunday 6th August**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Mary's Church and a joint service at 10am in St Francis' Church. There is also a baptism service at 2pm in St Mary's Church.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

The **Warm Space at St Francis'** will be open on Wednesday 2nd August from 10.30am-1pm.

Our **Volunteer Thankyou Event** is on Saturday 5 August between 10.30- 11.30am at St Francis of Assisi Church. If you have been involved in any initiatives at our churches, including helping at our Sunday morning services in any way, please do come along to have some social time with others. As well as our church activities, we also opened the

Warm Space on a Wednesday, Social Befrienders have continued to offer a listening ear over the telephone, and we arranged and delivered Christmas Bromley Foodbank hampers in the past year. Volunteers for these initiatives have included people from outside our church congregations and they have also been invited to this event.

Marian Haydon's funeral is at 10am on Thursday 10th August in the Crematorium Chapel at Bluebell Cemetery, Old London Road, Halstead.

Primrose Smith's funeral is at 11.15am on Tuesday 22nd August in St Mary's Church. More details to follow in due course.

We will continue to collect items for the **Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme** for those starting out in a new home with nothing. Starter packs for families in need include cutlery, crockery, duvet covers (not duvets), pillow slips, tea towels, saucepans, frying pans, bath towel, toothbrushes, etc. Please continue to bring any excess items that you have in cupboards at home.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, cold meat tins, desserts (e.g. sponge pudding, jelly, Angel Delight), coffee, ladies' deodorant and toothpaste. They have plenty of pasta, cereal and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here:

<https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Lord God,
your Son left the riches
of heaven and became
poor for our sake: when
we prosper save us
from pride,
when we are needy
save us from despair,
that we may trust in
you alone;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

First Reading:

Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in
our weakness; for we do
not know how to pray as
we ought, but that very
Spirit intercedes with
sighs too deep for
words. ²⁷ And God who
searches the heart,
knows what is the mind
of the Spirit, because
the Spirit intercedes for
the saints according to
the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all
things work together for
good for those who love

God, who are called
according to his
purpose. ²⁹ For those
whom he foreknew he
also predestined to be
conformed to the image
of his Son, in order that
he might be the
firstborn within a large
family. ³⁰ And those
whom he predestined
he also called; and those
whom he called he also
justified; and those
whom he justified he
also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to
say about these things?
If God is for us, who is
against us? ³² He who
did not withhold his
own Son, but gave him
up for all of us, will he
not with him also give us
everything else?

³³ Who will bring any
charge against God's
elect? It is God who
justifies. ³⁴ Who is to
condemn? It is Christ

Jesus, who died, yes,
who was raised, who is
at the right hand of God,
who indeed intercedes
for us. ³⁵ Who will
separate us from the
love of Christ? Will
hardship, or distress, or
persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril,
or sword? ³⁶ As it is
written,

'For your sake we are
being killed all day
long; we are accounted
as sheep to be
slaughtered.' ³⁷ No, in all
these things we are
more than conquerors
through him who loved
us. ³⁸ For I am convinced
that neither death, nor
life, nor angels, nor
rulers, nor things
present, nor things to
come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor
height, nor depth, nor
anything else in all
creation, will be able to
separate us from the
love of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

³¹ Jesus put before the crowd another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

³³ He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

⁴⁴ 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.'

⁴⁵ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.'

⁴⁷ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

⁵¹ 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' ⁵² And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been

trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

Post Communion Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for ever.

REFLECTION – Ken Bryan

We had our windows cleaned this week. They had become particularly dirty what with the weather and our grandson who had covered the patio doors with their sticky and muddy fingers. Plus, the odd dirty ball that had left its mark from their playing football in the garden. I think we can all imagine the sight and we have all had windows that have become very dirty over time which are exceedingly difficult to see through. The picture of the world beyond is not very clear at all.

We have a good window cleaner who works hard and leaves the windows sparkly clean. And we now have an uninterrupted view of our garden.

Jesus is giving us several parables to help us to see more clearly what he means about the kingdom of heaven. Not an easy thing to be clear about but he tries in several ways to make it easy for us to understand what he is getting at.

We have parables about sowing seeds, mixing with yeast, digging in a field, searching and fishing with a net. In all of these someone is active in doing something before something happens.

The first is the mustard seed that is sown by someone, possibly a farmer. The seed is very tiny, but it can grow into a very large bush several meters tall. So, like the Jewish faith grew from one man, Abraham, so Jesus though just one man is saying that God wants his kingdom to grow even more and will include everybody. As he is saying, all the birds of the air come to nest in its branches.

In the cooking, the yeast may not even be able to be seen but it permeates the whole loaf. Without it the loaf remains flat. Just as the kingdom of heaven, though not easily seen, can spread throughout the world. And it lifts the spirit. Using cooking as an example would have resonated with the women in the crowd.

The next two parables stress the great value of the kingdom of heaven. The first has a farmer digging in a field and unexpectedly coming across some valuables. Just as some people will discover Jesus and realise that they have found something that is of great value, and it will change their life.

Then the pearl is found by the rich man after a long and patient search. He realised that this was the most important thing and that he wanted to have it. This is like the story of Justin, a second century professor, who had studied all the philosophical schools and was still unsatisfied. Until one day he met a little old man in a field who told him about Jesus. He immediately went away and studied the scriptures and being convinced he

became a Christian even though it later led to his martyrdom. After his long search he had found the pearl of great value.

The parable about fishing is about perseverance. Will his hearers keep the faith until the last day when there will be a separation? In a fallen world there will be those who are to be separated out. Why and how is not for us to know now, but God knows. He will do the sorting whatever that may mean.

So, what will the kingdom of heaven look like? It's something that will flourish, given half a chance, something to be treasured above all else, something that has to be worked for – and it is recognisable by its effects.

Jesus was indeed the promised saviour who would bring in the kingdom of righteousness and justice. Jesus pointed to what was going on in the world around him: 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear and the good news is preached to the poor.' When we look at the world around us, at the despoiling of the planet, climate change, human suffering on an unprecedented scale, do we see signs of the kingdom? Not in its entirety, of course not; but glimpses of it, sufficient to give us hope for the future and encourage us to continue working and praying for its establishment here on earth?

God has work for us all to do: to stand up for justice, to champion the poor and the weak, to feed the hungry in body and spirit, to preach the good news in word and in deed.

Very few of us are cut out to be great evangelists or world changers but we are all cut out for something. However seemingly small or insignificant, it is our responsibility as faithful followers of Christ to exercise the gifts we have been given in the service of God and the whole of his creation.

When Jesus asked them 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

When reading that we can easily think that it is only ordained ministers who have received training to become like the scribes. But it is not only them - we have all had some guidance in understanding the scriptures. It is therefore for all of us to read the 'old treasure' in the bible and try to work out what 'new treasure' it might be saying to us today for us in our twenty-first century world.

To help us we could read the bible more often, not just listening on a Sunday to a couple of passages. We could read a passage daily with the help of some bible reading notes. We could read passages for ourselves and take a moment to understand what is being said in the context of the time that it was written, by whom and to whom. And then try to figure out what it might be saying for us today.

We must all be part of the work to bring in the kingdom of heaven here on earth now.

When looking for guidance to see more clearly areas of our world that need our help, our prayers, our money or our voice we could look to the words of the first hymn that is being sung this Sunday at St Mary's:

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

*Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

*Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed*

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

*Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.*

And the final verse is clear that we are not alone but there are many people, and they have many gifts that can be put to good use for God. And the words are:

Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

*Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.*

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Those who feel they do not belong in the place in which they live, feeling isolated, unsettled, unwanted or unloved. Feeling adrift from others and maybe from themselves, seeking and searching for answers and somewhere that feels like home.

Those surrounded by war, violence and upheaval, living in now derelict and destroyed areas that were once comfortable places to live.

Those who are segregated for their faith, tortured for their faith, cast adrift because of their faith. Unfairly treated because of their faith.

Those who stand out from the crowd and are discriminated against because of their ethnicity. Especially remembering this week Israel and the Holy Land and all its strife.

For those families who will struggle to cope during the summer school holidays, those struggling to feed their families without extra school support, those who struggle with lack of indoor space and precious little, if any, outdoor space to healthily wear out the children before bedtime. For those who have had poor experience of being parented and who now repeat the same with their own children.

For those living in the midst of immediately visible effects of climate change: excessive heat and flooded grounds, wildfires, landslides, parched ground. Remembering especially the people of Rhodes and the ongoing difficulties due to the loss of tourists.

Those in pain and anguish, physical and mental, and those who seek to care for them. Remembering especially Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, Brian Griffiths and Tina Hamilton.

Those who have recently lost loved ones, remembering especially the families of Marian Haydon and Primrose Smith.