

Connected

Sunday 28th February 2021
2nd Sunday of Lent

Verse For The Week

When Barnabas arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

(Acts 11: 23)

Sermon Snippets

Acts 11: 19-26

This week we're looking at the spread of the gospel in Acts 11. It charted the fact that not only did it spread to all corners of the known world at that time; but also that it spread to different cultures.

Up until this point the gospel was understood to be "mainly" for the Jews, but now we see it in Antioch received with joy by a large number of Greeks too. That must have come as a surprise to the early disciples seeing that this gospel had no boundaries at all. It makes me think – do I restrict in my mind those who I believe God can reach?

The wonder of our Christian history is that every language and culture has proved a place for the gospel. Could I see God at work in my friends and connections, even if that doesn't feel very likely? The "Thy Kingdom Come" initiative every May encourages us to pray for our friends. Also, these new Greek followers of the gospel were first called "Christians". We are very familiar with the expression – but that word has great depth of meaning – saying that we are 'of Christ' and that we belong to Him and follow Him.

If we describe ourselves as 'Christians' – does that word provide a fair assessment of our lives?

World Day of Prayer



Friday 5th March 2021

The service this year has been prepared by Christian women of Vanuatu, an archipelago of 80 islands in the South Pacific.

The town centre group were planning to hold the service at Clarence Park Baptist Church but will instead be joining with the Zoom meeting being organised at Milton Methodist at 10.30 am.

You are all invited to join the service on Zoom at 10.30am on March 5th using the following link:

<https://zoom.us/j/93332594488?pwd=bEtwREhVVHd1NkdQY2tlaEhYUmtxQT09>

Meeting ID: 933 3259 4488

Passcode: 596239

If you would like to make a contribution towards the work of World Day of Prayer, please click on this link to go straight to their website. Every year, donations collected at the World Day of Prayer are used to support Christian charities around the world.

You can collect copies of the Order of Service from the Christ Church foyer. If you would like one and are unable to collect one please contact me and I will deliver one to you.

Liz Cole - Tel: 782886

Watch the Sunday Service

at www.ccwsm.org.uk

Go to the 'Church Life' menu and click on the 'Sunday Services' page.

Prayer Pointers

Monday

We pray for all those making international decisions about the state of the world, especially the ecology of our planet. May we ask for wisdom for each of them and for the insight to do our part.

Tuesday

We pray for those who staff and those who run local Nursing Homes, especially Nashley House and others with which our two churches have links. We pray for wisdom and discernment for the leaders of North Somerset Council and for our local Councillors. May we pray for them as valued members of our community.

Wednesday

Please take time to give thanks for the work of the local police, fire and ambulance staff and pray for protection from harm and the virus, and for wisdom as they deal with members of the public.

Thursday

Pray for our Vicar, Tom Webber, and his wife Chris. Remember the others on the leading and preaching team that you know and hold them up before our Lord, that they may receive a rich blessing this week: Julie B, David A, Terry B, Ian G, Keith H, Jeff M, Meg H, Chris C, Pam S, John B, Donna P, Angeline W, and Chris W.

Friday

Please pray for the team preparing the online service for Sunday: the preacher, the leader and the editing team. May we pray that God the Holy Spirit will use the service, and give us, and the many other people both locally and around the world, the ears to hear His word.

Saturday

Pray with gratitude for those who clean our churches, who are part of the maintenance teams, brass cleaning and flower arranging rotas, those who check church notice boards and displays, and those who unlock and close the doors at the end of each day.

Sunday

Please pray for our tech team that this time will be a blessing to them. We pray that many will tune into the service this morning. Pray God's blessing on all who take part both on screen and as worshippers in their homes.

Sorry - there are only three pages this week!

If you have an article that you would like to contribute for a future edition of Connected, please have a chat with Phil in the Church Office. It could be a poem, book review, puzzle, thoughts about something you've read, or similar.

Notices

Prayer Opportunities

Even though our two churches are closed for public worship, Christ Church is open weekday mornings for private prayer from 09.00 to 12.00. There are two helpful prayer stations in the church which provide visual prompts.

Please use the hand sanitiser as you come in to the church, wear a face covering (unless exempt) and follow the rules on social distancing.

In addition we now have a Bible Story Trail in the church garden. This is a great opportunity for people of all ages to engage with the story of God's love in Creation. It even has something to say about Coronavirus!

How to access Church At Home Packs

Click on the Sunday Services page of the Christ Church website, or [click this link](#). Select the service you want to watch. Underneath the video of the service, you will see a box entitled Download Files. Click on the word 'Notes' and your pack will appear.

Bible Notes

There is a box of Bible Notes in addressed envelopes awaiting collection by Subscribers in the Christ Church foyer between 9am and 3.30 Mon - Thu and 9am - 12noon on Fridays.

Subscribers are asked to collect their own notes, but if they recognise the name of someone who lives near them, could they please deliver those as well.

Contact Details

Rev. Tom Webber (709343)
(Day off - Tuesday)

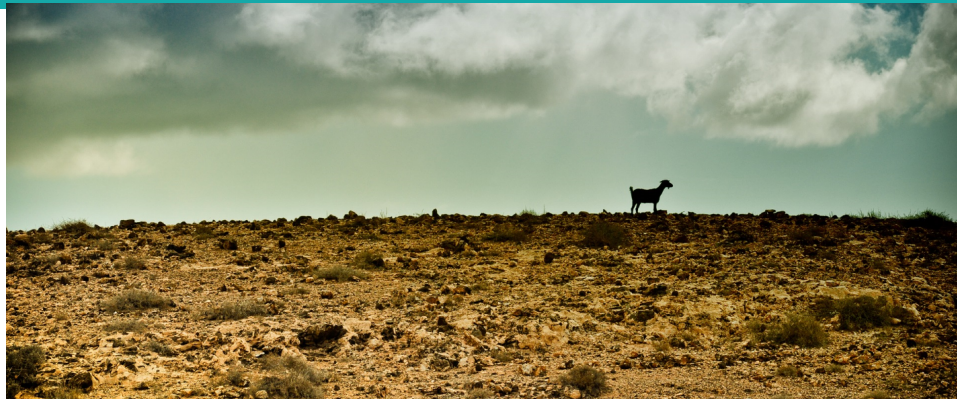
Church Office (641016)
(8.30-12.30 Mon-Fri)
e: office@ccwsm.org.uk
w: www.ccwsm.org.uk

Lent Reflection

In the second of our Lent Reflections, Terry looks at God's grace in the face of suffering and violence.

Psalm 22: 23-31

"You who fear the Lord Praise Him... for he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one."



Psalm 22 is a remarkable Psalm. The first two-thirds of this Psalm describe the suffering of the Psalmist who is suffering what seems to be a violent and painful assault. He cries out 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me' and the words are echoed by Jesus on the cross, for the description of the Psalmist's pain is very similar to the pain that would ensue from crucifixion even though such a means of death was not used at the time of the Psalm. Yet the Psalmist trusts in God to bring him out of his suffering and save him and so ends with praise to God, not because those who performed the violence have been beaten but because God has brought him through the suffering by His compassion and grace. It is God's grace that is victorious.

There is a story repeated again and again in human culture of the wicked using violence on the good until a good individual stands up and uses stronger violence to defeat evil and rescue the good. The hero's fight triumphs and we all cheer. It was the staple of the cowboy western and is still the reason we watch James Bond, Star Wars, Die Hard and many of the Clint Eastwood films. We cheer when the villain is beaten. But it perpetuates what is called 'The myth of Redemptive Violence' - the idea that only stronger violence used by the good can defeat evil.

It is a twisted version of the idea of the scapegoat. In Old Testament times once a year the sins of the people were ceremonially placed on the goat and it was then sent into the wilderness to carry all the evil away. In the myth the scapegoat that carries all wrong is chosen and not only excluded but usually killed to redeem us. And so, it has been used by institutions of both state and religion to find and exclude the sinner so we can be justified. Therefore, it is acceptable for Christians to burn heretics, white folk in the USA to hang black people, and Nazis to gas the Jew. It is used to justify the Crusades and the actions of ISIS. It is the sin of fear and hatred that makes us look for the one who is different to us and legitimate the violence used against them. The idea does not always pass without comment. The classic western High Noon has us all cheering when a reluctant Gary Cooper's sheriff single-handedly takes on the baddies and shoots them dead. But he then disgustedly throws his badge in the dust and becomes a farmer with his Quaker wife. Violence will only perpetuate violence and two wrongs can never create a good.

It is Jesus who becomes the true scapegoat who reveals the lie of the myth of redemptive violence. Both state and religious leaders conspire in his crucifixion and suffering. But Jesus willingly accepts the violence done to him. He doesn't retaliate with violence himself. He absorbs the violence as the only way and Jesus takes the hatred and fear on himself. In so doing he truly triumphs over evil. It is Redemptive Suffering that truly wins out. The idea of redemptive suffering is what runs through this Psalm and also through the classic passage of Isaiah 53. Both these Old Testament passages end with praise to God and the glorification of the sufferer. God sees and acknowledges the defeat of evil by absorbing all the negatives. Jesus too is to be glorified as God raises him back to life as the true conqueror of evil. Love and Grace alone triumph over evil.

When things are difficult and painful, or if maybe we feel God has abandoned us, what do we do? When things are wrong do we look for a 'scapegoat' to blame? How does the idea of redemptive suffering transform us and the way we think or behave?

Terry