

5th Week after Trinity: 17th – 13rd July 2022

Greetings from Eileen

Dear friends,

This is the last week of school term many schools, and for some children and students this may be their final week in a Primary or Secondary school. As parish churches we delight in having precious and positive relationships with our schools, their teachers and staff as well as the children and families. We wish all of them a refreshing and reinvigorating summer holiday.



Our children and youth leaders have planned the **WONDERFUL WORLD HOLIDAY CLUB** to take place on **Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 3rd to 5th August 2022 from 2 to 5pm on Gainford's Green** (or in St Mary's Church). For **£1 per child (5 to 11 years)** every child can expect fun, creative activities, and refreshments. In past summer clubs, children have made bug hotels, repurposed unwanted t-shirts into shoulder bags, made herb scones, foraged, learnt about flowers as food for honey bees, and had private visits to Auckland Castle and Auckland Tower. This year children will explore life in the River Tees and on our river bank. **To sign up or find out more contact Claire Mead: Claire.L.Mead@gmail.com**

Cost of Living challenges: Please continue to support our Foodbanks. For Winston, please note the collection will be 5pm on Wednesday 20th July for those who work and Thursday 21st July I am outside Staindrop 'Cutting Room'. For Gainford, donated items are welcome inside St Mary's Church in the box by the font.

Invitation to join our Parochial Church Councils (PCC) and Choral Evensong 'Quire': I am glad and very thankful for our churchwardens and everyone who serves on our PCCs, which play a very important role in the active and positive life of our churches. This week I also confirmed that we will proceed with another season of Choral Evensong Services at St Mary's, Gainford, commemorating 6 feast and seasonal days: Michaelmas; All Souls; Epiphany, Lent, Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Pentecost. Please get in touch with me about serving on the PCCs of St Andrew's and of St Mary's, and if you'd like to join the Choral Evensong Quire or to find out about the Services.



This Sunday, our Blessing of Animals Service resumes after a 2-year disruption! Join me on the Green in Gainford at 10.45am. Bring a rug to sit on or picnic chairs. There is plenty of room to spread out. In previous experiences, the animals were relaxed and very happy to be blessed. St Mary's Band will be accompanying this short and lively service.

This Sunday 17th July 2022

9.30am, St Andrew's, Winston, Holy Communion with Rev'd Canon Dr Chris Knights
10.45am St Mary's, Gainford, Blessing of Animals Service on the Green

God, the most holy and glorious Trinity is with us, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES

† **OPEN GARDENS:** A big thank you to our St Mary's Church Gainford team, those who baked and contributed cakes, and the 12 Open Gardens for a glorious fundraising event last Sunday. We are enormously grateful to have raised more than £1,000 raised including £250 from teas and cake.



† **Advance notices:**

- † **Messy Church welcomes families and children of all ages on Sunday 24th July 3.30-5.30pm** at St Mary's Church, Gainford. We are pleased that this new energetic form of church is already a time of welcome and worship for families all neighbouring town and villages.
- † **On Monday 18th July, ITV, 9pm, the Long Lost Family Special** filmed in St Mary's Church and on Gainford's green will be broadcast with Brenda Clayton talking about her grandfather Harry Miller. It is part of the story of the young WWI soldiers, who were found more than 100 years after they fell at Passchendaele.
- † **Barnard Castle Deanery Synod:** The meeting for synod representatives is being held at 7pm on Tuesday 19th July on ZOOM. The link has been sent to members by email.
- † **Additional HOLIDAY CLUB!** If those dates don't suit your child(ren) we are pleased to recommend **Scripture Union Summer Residential for 8-11s Launchpad, 16-19 August** as Claire our youth leader is on the team. It's a great opportunity for our children to experience other Christian groups, have fun and grow in faith. It is based at an activity centre near Durham, and cost £ £138 per child (bursaries available). Contact Claire on: holidays@scriptureunion.org.uk

Collect for 5th Sunday after TRINITY

Almighty God,
send down upon your Church
the riches of your Spirit,
and kindle in all who minister the gospel
your countless gifts of grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Post-Communion Prayer

Loving Father,
we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son:
sustain us with your Spirit,
that we may serve you here on earth
until our joy is complete in heaven,
and we share in the eternal banquet
with Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

The First Reading: Colossians 1:15-28

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him — ²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

²⁴ I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵ I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

The Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴² there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Sermon, 4th Sunday after TRINITY: Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop, 10th July 2022 (Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37)

*O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal.*

Our Collect this Sunday, the prayer offered to us all in the Body of Christ, makes clear that God is the same protector of all who trusts in Christ. Regardless of status and position none are strong nor holy without our merciful God as ruler and guide.

We shall all stumble. Temptations that afflict us distinctively as individuals will be too beguiling. We shall be casual and are casual about things that matter less to us. That arrogance will lead to downfall and regret. None of us are secure without God. In public office, the higher one rises in the world, the greater the stumble. And so we have witnessed in our nation this week. But this is not the moment to gloat nor join the chatter, but the time to reflect with humility on our own lives and to seek God's help to exercise grace.

Reflecting on my life, I admit that from a very young age, I felt, and was aware, that there was something absolutely good even before I could hold a verbal conversation with anyone. In the kind eyes and gentle smile of a dying old man, I saw and knew God. I thank God that, from that moment onwards, somehow there was an always open channel – like a radio that was never switched off and, when I was later introduced to Jesus, my channel was always tuned to Jesus' frequency.

Friends, I was hardly 3. But this not a testimony of boasting – I am not luckier nor more deserving

than anyone. Indeed, it is unlikely that I shall ever understand nor try to work it out. And this is why I am convinced such ministry as Messy Church or a time of Bible stories with little ones has eternal value.

Paul wrote: *'May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from (God's) glorious power'*. Friends, whatever your lives' journeys, whether you have ever been faced with trials; whether you have made mistakes that have cost you or others whom you love; whether you have had cause to regret, it makes all the difference to live it with God's power. Real strength to overcome ourselves in the world comes only with God's power.

Paul tells us that God *'has rescued us from the power of darkness'*. Because of that continuously open channel to God, I was always able to choose his rescue. I was always able to recognise when I had fallen to the power of darkness, even if at times it took me much longer to accept what had happened than was good for me. Even if your recollection of being open to God in your life has come more recently, you are also able to choose to recognise the power of darkness and to choose God's rescue.

Some people believe their ambitions and tripping up in life has nothing to do with God. Some people believe they are born to greatness and that their falls from greatness are either a personal failure not to be cleverer in the world or some other persons' fault.

Others seek a life of peace and security. If we can somehow miss the rapids on the river, keep to the calm and still waters, hug the banks, life would be perfect.

Then there are those who live wishfully a life of avoidance. For them perfect life is only disrupted by the ambitious, who should but do not mind their own business.

Jesus answers a lawyer in our Gospel reading, who is not convinced of who Jesus is and tries catch him out and to disprove him. Jesus tells the story of the man who fell victim to robbers on his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. We have no information about why this man undertook this journey, but he did, and attackers left him half dead. So, trouble happens, whether we have walked into trouble or trouble had found us,

What follows helps us to understand the nature of God's power and the nature of rescue from the power of darkness.

Jesus refers to the Priest and Levite because this road from Jerusalem to Jericho was their regular route from the temple to their homes. In their appointed roles, they had religious rules and rituals to be kept. Touching a dead body was deemed unclean. To risk this – touching a dead body, was to risk their service and status in the temple and among their people.

Jesus then refers to a Samaritan, who saw the injured man, was moved with pity, and took care of him. Unlike the Priest and Levite, the Samaritan did not have much to lose in his social world by his act of compassion.

But love is life's leveller. The power we have in Christ, is the power not to judge nor despise the Priest and Levite, nor to lay superstitious guilt on the victim – that he was an unlucky person or perhaps deserved his bad luck. In Christ, we are called to humility so that the Samaritan's act does not raise him up to be the good above all other. It could be argued that the Samaritan had greater empathy for the victim because he and the Samaritan people had been victims of social unkindness.

This week, in the life of our nation, whatever our views may be of our outgoing Prime Minister, Boris

Johnson; whatever our view may be of anyone who has fallen short; remember that we all fall short of the glory of God. We give thanks that God has given us the way to be freed from the power of darkness by his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

May we put on Christ's nature and in humility choose the power of God's mercy. There is no power more glorious than the power of love exercised with grace and mercy. Let us pray for all to come before God's merciful throne to receive His redeeming grace.

Amen