

6th Week after Trinity: 24th - 30th July 2022

Greetings from Eileen

Dear friends,

The record for hottest day in England was exceeded this week. I am more accustomed than many as I come from the tropics of South East Asia where temperatures are high all year round, and I admit to often missing the sunshine and warmth. But recent weeks and the 2 hottest days have even been remarkable to me. Join me in praying for those in the most affected parts of this country, Europe, and North America, who have lost their homes, and the parishioners and clergy whose church, the Parish Church of St Mary & St Peter, Wennington, was burnt down with nearby houses. Although not much has been reported in the media about those in hospitals, care homes, and the infirm in their own homes, we know they are more susceptible to these exceptional conditions. I am sure you'd have been caring about, and looking in on, elderly and infirm friends and neighbours.



We are thankful to be able to open our churches daily during daylight hours. There is hardly a day that passes without parishioners, visitors, and pilgrims choosing to spend time in St Andrew's and St Mary's. Today, I was blessed when a visitor knocked on the vicarage door simply wishing to thank the Vicar in person for our open church. This week, Paul and Yvonne Raab from Germany paid a return visit to Gainford, having taken a holiday here 3 years ago, and joined us for our Blessing of Animals Service. Paul is an organist at two churches near Hamburg: a Lutheran church and a Roman Catholic parish church, and was delighted to have access to our church organ. With Yvonne, they have pulled bells with our Tower team.

Next Wednesday and the week after, from 4.30pm to 5.30pm, July 27th and August 3rd, Paul Raab will give an informal recital of J. S. Bach's Preludes and Fugues in St Mary's Church, Gainford. There's an open invitation for people to drop in to listen and make a donation to the church if they wish.

Last Sunday, Matthew Gibson a young organist whose family lives in Winston, joined our congregation at St Andrew's Church. Matthew, now a professional organist in London, had given us a recital before the pandemic, and we hope he would grace us with another recital in the near future.

This Sunday 24th July 2022, everyone is welcome to join me at
9.30am, St Andrew's, Winston, Holy Communion
10.45am St Mary's, Gainford, Holy Communion

At 3.30pm Messy Church welcomes families and children of all ages **at St Mary's Church, Gainford**. This new energetic form of church is a time of informal welcome and worship, which concludes with Tea time: a generous spread of food and drink to bless fellowship together.

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

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES

- † **Wedding of Robert Ellwood and Ellie Chapman:** We join in prayer for the Blessing of Holy Matrimony when Robbie and Ellie are married on Saturday 30th July 2022 at St Mary's Church, Gainford.
- † **The new Audio Visual System at St Mary's, Gainford is in!** Like a new house, we are in the 'snagging phase' of using the system. A special thank you to Geoff Taylor and Tom Deakin for doing all the ground work and the application of permission and grants towards this facility.

Advance notices:

- † **WONDERFUL WORLD HOLIDAY CLUB:** We hope many children would join us 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. 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 on info@gainfordwinston.church

- † **Additional HOLIDAY CLUB!** If those dates don't suit your child(ren) we are pleased to recommend the **Scripture Union Summer Residential for 8-11s Launchpad, 16th-19th 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 6th Sunday after TRINITY

Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Post-Communion Prayer

God of our pilgrimage,
you have led us to the living water:
refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

The First Reading: Colossians 2:6-15

⁶As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; ¹²when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

The Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

¹He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' ²He said to them, 'When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.'

⁵ And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." ⁷ And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹ 'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

I have chosen to share the sermon preached at the Consecration Service in York Minster of Rev'd Canon Arun Arora (formerly Vicar of St Nicholas Church, Durham) delivered by Canon Paula Gooder, Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, London. As it happens, it bears relevance to the Bible readings for this Sunday, on which I shall preach. Do find time to read the Bible passages set for that service. I know 2 of the 3 well, but found myself re-discovering them, being blessed to read them afresh, and being reminded of the nature of God and in Jesus.

Sermon, Consecration Service at York Minster, 15th July 2022: Canon Paula Gooder (Proverbs 3:1-8; James 5:7-11, 13-18; Matthew 5:43-end), on the Feast Day of St Swithun

When I first began lecturing nearly 30 years ago. I distinctly remember expressing my utter terror at the thought of the task to my, then, college principal who replied, 'Just be brilliant and you'll be fine.' Needless to say, I did not find this particularly helpful advice and it did nothing to allay my terror whatsoever. This unhelpful advice came somewhat vividly to mind this week as I was perusing the readings set for today and wondering what advice one might seek to offer to two people – Arun and Rob – about to be consecrated as Bishops in the Church of God. As I explored the set passages my eye fell on the last verse from the Gospel reading this morning – '*Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect*'. How about that for advice to new bishops? 'Be perfect and you'll be fine.'

Over the next weeks and months and years you will, I'm sure, encounter many a person who will, consciously or unconsciously, hold you to the standard of perfection and when, on occasion, as is only inevitable, you fail to live up to it will point out your failings in full and gory detail. When they do, I hope you will think back to this moment and remember that actually the word perfect here doesn't mean quite what we might think it means. But more of that in a moment, first let us turn to St Swithun whose feast day we celebrate today.

As you can see from the front of your service book, St Swithun was a 9th century Bishop of Winchester and due to various events surrounding his burial and subsequent removal a tradition grew up around St Swithun's day expressed in a rhyme

*St. Swithun's day if thou dost rain
For forty days it will remain*

*St. Swithun's day (15 July) if thou be fair
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair.*

In other words, if it rains today it will rain for another forty days; if it is sunny today it will be sunny for another forty days. Let's not worry about whether this is true or not, what is interesting is that the tradition reveals something powerful about human nature that is as true today as it was in the 9th century. There is something deep within us that calls out to know what is going to happen to us – will it rain or be sunny this summer? Will my life turn out as I hope? What will the future hold for me? What's going to happen to our country over the next months and years? What will happen in my local church? What's the future of the Church of England? As a writer and speaker, I have been fascinated to notice, in the past year or so, the number of invitations I have received to speak about the future of the Church – what is going to happen to it? What will it look like in 5, 10, 20 years' time? It feels a little as though people are looking for a St Swithun's day for the church. If on this day something happens, the future will be set fair for the next five years; if the other happens it will be stormy weather ahead.

The readings set for today speak powerfully into this instinct – and not just by observing that the sun shines both on the righteous and unrighteous and the rain falls on the righteous and unrighteous. Today's readings in a variety of ways point to the fact that a life of faith, a life lived in the long love of God is not about swift answers or solutions easily summed up in doggerel rhyme. We cannot tell what lies ahead of us. A life of faith is, as Proverbs tells us about loyalty and faithfulness through the length of your days. It is about trust – not of yourself but of the God who knows and has loved you from your mother's womb. This kind of life, James tells us, is about patience. It is about being like a farmer who knows how to wait until just the right moment for harvest – not rushing onwards to a quick win but knowing how to wait gently but with strength for God's timing rather than our own. Trust, loyalty, faithfulness, patience, gentleness, strength: these are the hallmarks of a life of faith. These are what God holds before us as virtues to grow into. Of course, they don't mean that you don't do anything while you wait but they do mean that you cultivate a different way of being – a way of being that holds the long view, that doesn't rush to judgement, that doesn't jump in with ill-judged speed; that doesn't conclude that simply because this is how things are today it is the way they will always be.

All of this brings us back to being perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. It is fascinating that the English translators have mostly decided to opt for a translation of the Greek word in question that states that we should all not only aim for perfection but be perfect. There may be a few people here who on hearing that command nod and say, 'done that what's next?' but most of us look at the instruction with foreboding, dread and possibly despair. Not only are we to be perfect, we are to be perfect in the same way as God is perfect. If that doesn't make you quake, even a little bit, there's something wrong with you.

As I said, though, it is curious that the translators opted for 'perfect' as a translation here. There are, in my opinion, other much better translations. The Greek word – for those who are interested in such things -- is *teleios* and it is a word bound up with time, long lived out time. It implies wholeness or completeness. It suggests integrity. When it is used elsewhere in the New Testament it is translated 'mature'. It isn't about never getting anything wrong, it is about character and how you live in the world.

This verse stands at the end of Matthew 5 in which Jesus offers teaching on how to live as Christians. We are, he says, to be salt and light; we are to be righteous; not angry with each other; we shouldn't retaliate

when wronged and we are to love our enemies. How, we might find ourselves exclaiming, how are we meant to do all that? The answer, I think, is in this verse. Be full of integrity, as your father in heaven is full of integrity. Take the long view, live your life in trust and faithfulness. Don't rush, be patient. Be whole as your father in heaven is whole. Be mature.

And when we still ask how to do this – this verse reminds us – we are whole, mature, full of integrity in the same way as God is. So, if we want to know 'how?' the answer is that we spend time in the presence of God -- understanding God's own wholeness and integrity; God's wisdom and patience; God's love and vision for the world.

It turns out then that this small verse – far from being something to strike terror into our souls – is one of the most important verses in the whole of the Gospels. In simple summary it reminds us of who we are to be and how we are to do that. The Message translation is not to everyone's taste but sometimes it hits the nail on the head. The translation of this verse is one of those times, it reads:

“In a word, what I'm saying is, 'Grow up'. You are kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

Not, after all, such bad advice for new Bishops, or come to think of it for any of us.

Amen