

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 25th October 2020

Bible Sunday Trinity 20

This service can be accessed via the telephone on 01308 293062

*At the beginning of our services in church today we will light a candle,
you may wish to light a candle at home too.*

The service for today has been prepared by Liz Howlett, with intercessions written by Sue Taylor, Churchwarden at Swyre and can also be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley churches for Bible Sunday. We begin with a prayer:

Loving God, please open our eyes to your presence; open our ears to your call; open our lips to your praise and open our hearts, that we may receive all you long to give us, now and always.

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Psalm 119: 10-12

With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes.

Invitation to Confession

The word of God is living and active. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Prayers of Penitence

Let your faithful love come unto me, O Lord,
even your salvation, according to your promise:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Your word is a lantern to my feet
and a light upon my path:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost;

O seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

New Testament Reading

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 24:30-35

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Reflection

'As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.'

Today is Bible Sunday – I wonder if you have a favourite bible passage, story, character, and/or parable – perhaps they have changed over time, or maybe you have found different ones have been particularly helpful, or challenging, in different situations in your lives. I remember reading the parable of the good Samaritan to myself as a small child and being moved to tears by the final words of the father to his older boy, 'we had to celebrate because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found'. In recent years, when visiting my mother who lives with dementia, we have occasionally sung hymns together, such as, 'O God our help in ages past', which is a version of Psalm 90. Mum can't read anymore, but she has the words and tune deep within her and the words describing God as our shelter from the stormy blast seem very appropriate. I would say that in our current situation these words are actually apt for us all, as we continue to live in the storm of Covid-19.

One thing that can be helpful when diving into a book or passage in the bible is to get to know more about the people and situation involved – let's do a bit of that now with our Colossians reading this morning. These verses come from a letter written, perhaps in the 60s AD, to the new Christians living in Colossae, a small town in the west of Turkey about 100 miles from the port of Ephesus. These believers had formerly been pagans and so to be addressed as 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved' was not a formality, or something they would have taken for granted from their previous lives. This was a precious new identity, 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved'.

The letter to the Colossians follows a typical structure for letters in those times, and our passage comes from the section devoted to pastoral advice and encouragement to live well with God and neighbour. What is really striking in this letter is the imagery that is used. The Colossians are urged to '**clothe** themselves with compassion and kindness' and later 'above all to **clothe** themselves with love'. This is a rich image and it would have rung bells loudly for those first hearers, for at their full immersion baptism, they would have taken off all their clothes, symbolising taking off and leaving behind their past lives, with all the actions and thoughts that hurt and damaged themselves and others. Then they would have gone right down under the water, (dying with Christ) and when they came back out, they would have put on new white clothing, which would symbolise their rising to new life as God's beloved. Therefore, as they sat together in their congregation, listening to this letter being read out, they would hear this passage as going right to the heart of their new Christian identity. They were learning to live in their new God-given clothes, which weren't just giving comfort and warmth but were providing a whole new way of looking at and behaving towards themselves, others and God, through Christ.

I wonder if you have had that experience of putting on a new outfit and feeling different about yourself. Do you remember trying on your first school uniform? Or perhaps putting on a badge when you first joined an organisation? It isn't just about clothing – it symbolises something deeper about our identity – who we are; what and whose rules we have signed up to. Most of our 'uniforms' are temporary. The football scarves come off at the end of the match day, the choir uniform gets carefully put away after a concert. Even judges do not wear their wigs at home (I hope!) and police officers and refuse collectors have times when they are off duty. Perhaps we could say that the deeper the identity, the longer the 'uniform', the clothing stays on. For the Colossians and for us, for as long as we continue to choose to follow Christ, the new clothes as God's beloved are ours to wear. It may feel demanding – it is demanding – the highest standards are expected of us in every area of our lives and it is a lifetime's work, but there is forgiveness, there is compassion for us also, for we are bound to struggle and get things wrong, frail humans as we are. There is the story of a man who asked a monk, 'What do you **do** in the monastery?' and the monk replied, 'We fall down and we get up'. An old Japanese saying says, 'Fall down seven times and get up eight'.

Today is Bible Sunday – we could easily spend all day, all week, all year, exploring together and only touch the surface of this extraordinary collection of books. For the Colossians, the Jewish scriptures, our Old Testament, may have been available in written scrolls, but probably not any of the gospels in the form we know them. They may have had a collection of sayings of Christ – as it says later in this same passage, 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'. But theirs was a much more oral society and they may well have committed to memory the passages from the Old Testament and the words of Christ which had been taught them when they first became believers.

We have so much more at our fingertips – let's take advantage of that more – more to let dwell in our hearts, more to wrestle with, more to help us as each day we clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience and above all love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Amen.

Let us remember that we are in the presence of God; in our homes, in church, wherever we are sharing in this service.

On this Bible Sunday we give thanks to God that we may read the bible in whichever translation or version that we choose. We pray for all those people for whom, this is not possible.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

We ask a blessing on all bishops priests and ministers; especially here in the Bride Valley and give thanks for their support and encouragement in these anxious times as winter approaches, and the cases of the covid virus increase.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

In the world we pray for those living in areas of conflict. Syria, South Sudan, Palestine. And we bring to mind the people of America in these times of uncertainty and instability.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

We entrust to God's care and keeping all those who are ill or afraid today that they may find reassurance and healing.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

We pray for all who have departed this life; and for those martyrs in the past who died for their belief that all people should have access to the bible in their own language.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the Saints and Angels, we commend ourselves and all people to God's unfailing love.

Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever. Amen**

Final Prayer

God of all grace, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread, who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

The Peace

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you. Amen.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is included in this service is copyright The Archbishop's Council (2000).

Common Worship: Times and Seasons, material from which is included in this service, is copyright The Archbishop's Council (2006).