

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 15th November

Trinity 23

This week's service has been prepared by the Reverend Jane Williams and can be accessed by dialling 01308 293062

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle if it is safe to do so.

Welcome and gathering

We come from scattered lives to meet with God, let us recognise his presence with us.

God's Eternity and Human Frailty

Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90.1 and 2

Confession

In a dark and disfigured world, we have not held out the light of life: Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

In a hungry and despairing world, we have failed to share our bread: Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

In a cold and loveless world, we have kept the love of God to ourselves. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Heavenly Lord, you long for the world's salvation: stir us from apathy, restrain us from excess and revive in us new hope that all creation will one day be healed in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

1st Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25.14-30

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Reflection

Why is it that the gospel, this offer of good news is so rejected by some people? They don’t want to know. What could God offer them that they don’t already have or know to be true? Incredible though it is some people look at Jesus and hate him and the God he represents. They feel threatened, bored, hating the way he breaks their rules about God and others simply do not recognise what he has to offer.

These passages set before us in the run up to advent contain stark warnings: it is possible to reject the love of God and therefore reject your own life. It is possible to live in such a way that you do not recognise Life when it stands right in front of you.

The slave in Matthew’s parable knows his master well, but he fears and dislikes him and we have no idea why or what has gone on before in his life that render it so. To this slave, God is not ‘good news’ because he is too obsessed with his own failure. He cannot see that all the other slaves are rewarded for their efforts whether they have earned big profits or small.

In his mind he is already inadequate because he has only been trusted with a small amount, less than the others therefore he must be less thought of. He is afraid and resentful and this

resentment comes bubbling up when the master returns. He's expecting to be in trouble so he's determined to have his own say first.

"If you are so scared of me then why didn't you try harder to please me?"

And the slave has no answer, it's as if he had decided long ago to give up trying, nothing he does will ever please the master.

He has turned his own failure into a weapon, blaming God that he is not a success. He cannot recognise 'good news' because he doesn't know himself. He doesn't know what he needs to feel loved. He has no experience of what it is to be 'real'.

Why is the good news of God's love so alarming? Perhaps for many of us, we do not know how to be loved. We might know how to be pampered or to indulge ourselves, or how to whine about how misunderstood we are. But not how to be loved by God's all consuming, totally transforming and absolutely unconditional love.

Do you want to respond to God's love? Are you ready? Then, don't hold back!

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. (Based on Ephesians 3)

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For the peace that comes from God alone,
For the unity of all peoples, and for our salvation.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For the Church of Christ, for our Bishops: Nick, Karen and Andrew, Archdeacons, all who minister across the Bride Valley and for the whole people of God.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For all the nations of the word and particularly South Sudan,
For Elizabeth or Queen and all in authority.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For this community, for our neighbours and friends.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For the good earth which God has given us and the wisdom and will to conserve it.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For the elderly and infirm, for all suffering the effects of ill health,
The poor, the unemployed, the prisoners and the homeless,
And for all who care for them.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

For those dying and those who mourn, as we look towards the day when we all share the
fullness of the resurrection.
Let us pray to the Lord, **Lord have mercy.**

Pause ...

Yours is the majesty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Sa *We say the prayer that Jesus taught us:*

All **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.**

Let us bless the Lord, **Thanks be to God.**

**Blessing, honour and glory be yours,
Here and everywhere,
Now and forever.
Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.