

Bulletin for Sunday 27th September 2020

Good morning! Autumn seems to be properly here, bringing both chillier mornings and seasonal compensations. I spent a few days this last week down in Devon, and everywhere I walked I was able to browse on blackberries. Then, driving home, I noticed how many apple trees there are along our main roads and motorways - the result, I suspect, of years and years of travellers throwing away apple cores! Apples large and small, red, green or yellow, were hanging there as tasty food for people and wildlife.

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! (R&S 74)

Prayer: God of creation, constantly creating,
we thank you for the regularity of circling seasons -
for the repetition which makes them feel safe and familiar...
But we thank you also for the novelty of each one,
bringing fresh experiences, different weather, new activities.
Help us not to look backwards, lamenting what has finished,
but to embrace the present and the future,
with you, the living God, amongst us.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we bring to you or give in your service,
today and every day. In Jesus' name, Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Matthew chapter 21: verses 23-32

Reflection: Actions speak louder than words. Surely one of the most easily understood proverbs that we all learned as children. And in my experience it is indeed actions that influence us most. I knew of a Headteacher who took time in assembly to remind students of the school uniform rules. She spoke at length about the importance of school skirts being long enough, but produced only amusement, because her own skirt was shorter than theirs. Actions speak louder than words; and to have any integrity, our words have to match our actions.
Jesus asks the religious and political leaders a question which they dare not even answer, because they can see the catch: they should have responded to John the Baptist as so many others had (and notice that Jesus mentions John's baptisms, not his preaching - action rather than just words there too). Instead they, the so-called leaders of the people, had been left behind, talking amongst themselves, while many came to believe.
When Jesus put the situation into a parable, the leaders could understand it perfectly!

"Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary use words." Francis of Assisi

Hymn: O Jesus, I have promised (R&S 509)

Prayer: God of grace
We hold before you all those who need you most:
both the impoverished, homeless and hungry,
and those ignorant of their neighbours' poverty;
both those wounded and traumatised by war,
and those who profit from the arms trade;
both the lonely, anxious and despairing,
and those too busy to share their time and their lives...
God of grace, in your mercy make us part of the solution,
not the problem.....
We hold before you all those we love;
those we worry about;
those we feel responsible for.....
Hear our prayers, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes (R&S 137)

May we see clearly and accept with honesty
the things we need to learn and to change
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and every week. Amen

Please remember that for everybody's sake we must take care to keep our distance and to leave at the end of the service without lingering to chat. I know it's a great temptation to start talking but.... The 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' meetings on Zoom are a better opportunity to catch up safely with news, in comfort, at home. Or a phone call.

There will again be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom on Sunday evening. We shall be hearing the story of Moses getting water from a rock, and also singing hymns to Ellen's piano accompaniment. All very welcome, online or using a landline phone, contact me for details if you want to join us for the first time.

Anne Lewitt