

**Bulletin for Sunday 21st March 2021**

Good morning! In a week which has seen Red Nose Day and the first day of Spring, I hope you have all been able to enjoy some sunshine and some laughter...

We'll pause as we come before God..... and then let's praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Let all God's people join in one (R&S 113)

Prayer: Loving God

we praise you for your open arms  
held out to embrace us all in welcome,  
and then on the cross, opened wide for the world.  
As we travel through Lent  
may we let go of the things which don't bring life  
and learn to nurture love and laughter, which do.  
We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
and everything we give in your service,  
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Jeremiah ch 31 verses 31-34 and John ch 12 verses 20-33

Reflection: There is a sense, in both these readings, of God's time. A sense of there being a time for things to happen, a time when God's plans would come to fruition. John's gospel is really all about the gradual build up of events towards the revelation of Jesus' identity and the fulfilment of God's intentions for the salvation of the world. In this passage it seems as though Jesus recognises a marker, an indicator that the time has come - is now. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified", he says.

So what was the trigger for him at this point? Apparently it was the arrival of a group of Greeks - Gentiles who were interested enough in God to come up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, but who remained outsiders, unable to enter the inner courts of the Temple. Only Jesus' crucifixion (being lifted up) and resurrection will "draw all people" to himself, so that Jews and Gentiles can worship and serve God together, as equals.

As we go through Lent perhaps we feel that we are getting closer to the climax of God's plans for salvation to be offered to all. We are all drawn to God... and we are all marked by God's covenant to be a blessing to the whole world.

"for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD". Amen.

Hymn: O For a thousand tongues to sing (R&S 285)

Prayer:           Compassionate God  
We pray for all who need to know  
both the welcome and the protection of your open arms:  
for those adversely treated because of their race...  
for those living in fear of violence or abuse...  
or forced from their homes by war and terror...  
As we remember those in need - those who are alone,  
or grieving, those who are ill, or exhausted by caring -  
we pray for an end to pain and tears.....  
Compassionate God, show us how to be compassionate;  
and hear all our prayers, spoken or unspoken,  
in Jesus' name, Amen

Hymn:            I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship (R&S 265)

Blessing:        May we, with all people everywhere, be drawn to Jesus...  
  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love  
this week and always.    Amen

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While we hope to open our buildings for worship soon, for this Sunday they remain shut and we continue to worship together on Zoom at 10.30am and again at 6.00pm; we also enjoy a chance to have a good chat at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.

The fifth Zoom Lent Group session, from 'God of Surprises' by Gerard Hughes, will be on Tuesday, March 23rd, at 7.30pm; all very welcome - more details from Gerald or me.

The next PACT lecture - on Zoom - on Friday 16th April at 7.30pm, will be given by Lord Dr Michael Hastings of Scarisbrick on 'The Future We Don't Know...'  
From what I hear it should be excellent. Poster / link to join is available from me.

Anne Lewitt