

**Bulletin for Sunday 29th August 2021**

Good Morning, Friends. Greetings on this August Bank Holiday weekend! I hope the skies stay blue and everyone gets a chance to enjoy the blessing of fine, mild summer weather.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Praise to the Holiest in the height (R&S 103)

Prayer: God of love, you know us better than we know ourselves:  
you see our contradictions and doubts - and accept us.  
As we come to seek you in worship  
we bring our whole selves and our real lives to you...  
Thank you for the communities we find ourselves in -  
may we work together to make them how you intend.  
We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
and everything we give, in your service,  
now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Mark chapter 7 verses 1-8 and 14-23

Reflection: When my children were in primary school, I used to go in sometimes to help. I soon learned the danger of standing in the corridor as all the hungry children headed for lunch - not least because it was a rule that they all had to wash their hands first, thus mowing down innocent parents in the corridor twice, both coming and going... The perfunctory wash which I'm afraid many of them achieved would not pass muster either with the Pharisees (for whom it was about 'observing the tradition of the elders') or in terms of the 'twenty-seconds with soap' that we are now enjoined, to kill viruses on our hands, such as Covid. Rituals like this soon become habits; and we hardly notice what we are doing, let alone why.

Jesus was deeply concerned that people should think about their behaviour and understand why it matters. Hand-washing is about hygiene. It is not a matter of morality - defiling us, or damaging our relationship with God. Jesus pointed out that what really matters is what comes from (and thus, what is in) our hearts. For both Jews and others at that time, it was believed that the heart was at the centre of thinking and decision-making - the heart was where you held your understanding of right and wrong. God cares about how we live our lives; about what comes from our hearts, especially how we treat other people, which should be with care, with generosity and with honesty. Unthinking rituals don't help to keep our lives on track - but holding our behaviour

up to Jesus' standard of loving our neighbour will enable our hearts and heads to understand what God intends for us.

Hymn:            Come down, O Love Divine            (R&S 294)

Prayer:            God of love, we pray for your world:  
we hold before you those we see in the media,  
who are far away and yet brought into our living rooms,  
especially the people of Afghanistan....  
may they find support and aid;  
we hold before you too our own neighbours,  
our friends and our loved ones.....  
you know all our needs, all our hopes and our fears.  
Loving God, hear all our prayers,  
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn:            God of grace and God of glory            (R&S 344)

Blessing:            May our words and actions reflect God's love;  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love  
now and always. Amen

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As we gradually open up, we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe; so please continue to wear masks in church, and let us know if you test positive for Covid after attending worship or another event in our buildings.

And bear in mind, it's impossible to make our churches risk-free.

There will NOT be an evening service on Zoom this week - back again next week.

Anne Lewitt