

Bulletin for Sunday 31st October 2021

Good Morning, Friends.

A quick reminder (just in case!) that the clocks go back an hour this weekend...
We pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Angel voices, ever singing (R&S 405)

Prayer: Great God, we praise and thank you:

for all the words of scripture, written through the ages,
teaching and enlightening us...
for the gospel - the good news brought by Jesus...
and for the inspiration of the Spirit
guiding us to understand...
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: Psalm 119 verses 1-8 and Mark 12: verses 28-34

Reflection: Near the end of October we may celebrate 'Bible Sunday'. If you look, sometime, at number 761 in our hymn book (Rejoice and Sing) you will see that our URC confession of faith says that, 'The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible, alive for God's people today through the help of the Spirit'. Every part of that statement is important - not least the word 'alive'. John Robinson, pastor to some of the Pilgrim Fathers who crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower, preached to them that, 'The Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word'. The Bible is not static and dead, but alive, dynamic and ever leading us towards the truth.

In our reading, Jesus talks with one of the scribes, an expert in the law which formed a vital part of their scriptures. Unlike some, this scribe's question is not hostile; and quickly they find that they agree - these two commandments: to love God and to love other people (not forgetting to love oneself) - are the most important, core, part of the law. They aren't new commandments, of course, but can be found in Deuteronomy 6: 5 and Leviticus 19: 18, respectively. What Jesus does is to extract them from the rest of the law and hold them out to us, highlighting their importance... emphasising to us that a life full of love is a life well-lived. Amen.

Hymn: God is love, let heaven adore him (R&S 95)

Prayer: God of infinite, eternal and unconditional love,
as we are made in your image, so teach us to love...
We pray for the climate talks in Glasgow -
teach us to love your world and all our neighbours...
We pray for those in areas of conflict or famine -
bless and protect them and all who work to bring aid...
We pray for those who are sick, grieving, or anxious -
may they find help, and know that they are loved...
We pray especially for those we love, and worry about.
Loving God, hear all our prayers,
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (R&S 663)

Blessing: May the word of God live in our hearts and minds,
and affect how we live our lives...
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
now and always. Amen

Reminder: there is a Group Service for all three churches at Petworth, at 10.30 am this Sunday (31st October). All very welcome! Please wear masks.

There will be a 'Sunday at Six' service on Zoom tonight as usual at 6pm.

Please continue to remember that we all have a part to play in caring for each other and doing what we can to keep everyone safe from Covid, which includes letting us know if you have a positive Covid test after recently being in church. Sadly it's impossible to make our churches completely risk-free.

Anne Lewitt