

5th July 2026. 5th Sunday after Trinity.

Prayer for today: Merciful God, you prepare for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

Among those who are sick we pray for Rosemary Belshaw, Will Sadler, Leo Pyle, Brenda Clark, Elizabeth Wood, Nigel Baty-Symes Andrew McKendrick, Kate Marris, Maureen Stevens, Prue and Nancy, Ned Ryan, Daniel Bosman, Suzie Dent, Nick Cook, Christina Baldwin, Lorraine Dodd, Kathleen Lee, Carol McKendrick, Stuart Bell, Maggie Bennett, Elizabeth Sambell, and Heather Loughhead.

Among those whose year's mind is about this time we remember Dina Swanepoel, Pat Pickworth, Jean Grubb, Robbie Hutchinson and Jean Hall.

The PCC meets on Wednesday 8th in the school at 7.30. Please send any items for inclusion on the agenda to Ruth Marlee or to me.

St. Mary's choir will be joining us for our service on July 26th. Anyone wishing to sing with the choir at that service will be very welcome. Please speak to Paul Berry or to me.

Readings

Zechariah 9: 9-12

⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the war-horses from Jerusalem,

and the battle-bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;

even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

Psalm 145: 8-15

The Lord *is* gracious, and full of compassion;

slow to anger, and of great mercy.

⁹ The Lord *is* good to all:

and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

¹⁰ All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord;

and thy saints shall bless thee.

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,

and talk of thy power;

¹² to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,

and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

¹³ Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

¹⁴ The Lord upholdeth all that fall,
and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all wait upon thee;
and thou givest them their meat in due season.

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-10

¹⁶ ‘To what can I compare this generation? They are like children
sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

¹⁷ “‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a
demon.” ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say,
“Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and
sinners.” But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.’

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and
earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and
learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this
is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ ‘All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one
knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father
except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give
you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am
gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your
souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Thoughts on today’s readings

It has long been popular to believe that the wonder and infinite
variety within nature point us to God as creator, and that
contemplating the heavens or standing top of a mountain can fill us
with a sense of religious awe and wonder. Yet these cannot explain
God to us, or necessarily bring us to a knowledge of God. The hymn
written by William Cowper which begins with the words ‘God
moves in a mysterious way’ goes on to speak of God ‘deep in
unfathomable mines’, and that ‘God is his own interpreter.’ These
words reflect to me something of what Jesus tells his listeners in
today’s verses from St. Matthew’s Gospel. ‘Look,’ he seems to say,
‘After centuries of prophecies and teachings, the very chosen people

of God are incapable of recognising God's messenger and God's own son when they are standing before them.'

The messenger, John , came with a call to repentance, and they said he was mad (a demon). The Son came with the Good News of God's purpose to reconcile all things to himself and they condemned him for not being holy enough (a friend of tax collectors and sinners). In his own home town, Capernaum, they were not interested. He would have received more of a response among the heathen in Tyre and Sidon. For only the Father knows his Son, and the Son alone knows his Father, and can make him known to those he has chosen.

We have an inbuilt desire to understand, to explain and to make sense of our life, our world ; many volumes of human wisdom are dedicated to this quest. Yet do they shed light or obscure it? The people of Capernaum had the Law and many centuries of religious teaching to draw on, yet it seemed to have the result that their minds were closed to the living Word of God in the person of the son of the carpenter from Nazareth.

But we are the ones reading these words today, and what do they say to us? Are we any brighter, or any wiser? In the 1960s it was

fashionable to declare that 'man had come of age', and this viewpoint was emphasised in such productions as 'The Ascent of Man' on television. Yet, 60 years after we were told about the 'white heat of the scientific revolution', it is true that we all have access to smartphones, but we are literally setting the earth on fire, turning it into a desert. The recent history of the human race is marked by insatiable greed and ambition, often dressed up as progress and 'growth', sometimes justified as 'manifest destiny.'

My childhood ended when, at the age of 16, my father set me off on a train to London, to join my first ship in the Royal Albert Docks. From henceforth I was expected to take on the responsibilities of an adult, but what did I know or understand? Certainly I had no experience of sacrifice, nor of the cost as well as the joy of love.

Jesus speaks multiple times of having to come like a child: the child has no power – power is in the hands of parents, or those with that role, and so the child is not governed by the illusion of autonomy , and its mind is not clouded by the burdens of adult responsibility. The people who rejected Jesus, and John before him, believed that the Law and wisdom of their age gave them a sure and reliable way of righteousness with God, but in fact they were blinded to the deeds

of God's power which took place before their eyes, and deaf to the Good News. They could not let go of what seemed like the safety of conforming to the rules, yet these were a straitjacket, not life-giving.

Reading these words ,and reflecting on the rejection of the humble, peaceful king promised by Zechariah, I am left with a question: what sort of god would bother with such a stubborn flock, persist with such sterile soil? And the only answer has to be love: that God loved, and loves the world, and the cost of that love is seen on the cross, which is the focus of God's love, action and revelation. That amazing love, explored by Charles Wesley in his beautiful hymn which begins with the words, 'And can it be?' is still being poured out to refresh the deserts of our hearts, and the word of life offers us true life and freedom.