



SERVICE SHEET
2nd August
2nd Sunday after Trinity

Canticle *Jubilate*

**O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.**

**Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.**

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise
give thanks to him and bless his name.**

**For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting,
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.**

Psalm 100

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

New Testament

Romans 9.1-5

¹I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— ²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; ⁵ to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

**² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;**

³ he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

**⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.**

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

**⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading

Matthew 14.13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' ¹⁷ They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' ¹⁸ And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

SERMON

Trinity 8 2020: The Faithfulness of God

On the Sunday on which Diana and I celebrate our Ruby Wedding anniversary it is perhaps appropriate that I find myself preaching on faithfulness. The focus in our readings is of course the faithfulness of God. The faithfulness of God that is seen in the story of God's people told in the Bible and ultimately in the coming of Jesus – the faithful Word of God – in human flesh – sharing our humanity and our life.

For that reason, though the faithfulness of God is beyond our imagining, a gift of grace and unbounded love, – we can say that faithfulness in human lives is indeed a reflection of that grace and love.

The faithfulness that we experience and live out in our friendships, among colleagues, in our families, in marriage, civil partnerships and lives shared intimately is good in itself, and reflects to us something of the life and love of God. As we say in the introduction to the marriage service – this commitment to each other is – “a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace”. This applies to marriage but also to many other ways in which we live faithfully together.

In some of our significant relationships our commitment and intent of faithfulness is declared in vows and promises – but they would mean nothing if our hearts were not in it. In other cases, it is not so formalised, but the passing of time and the deepening of affection make it firm and resilient. I may never have made a promise to my friend – but after so long and so much shared how can I turn my back on them now?

As we read the scriptures we see – right from the start – that God's faithfulness is not always met with the same faithfulness in response. The stories of the Garden of Eden, the call of Abraham, the slavery in Egypt, Exodus and wandering in the wilderness with all that grumbling – and then the persistent call of the prophets to return to the God who calls in love – all of these show us the steadfastness of God in promises and commitment – a faithfulness to a people who are sometimes faithful themselves but so often wayward and run after their own desires and indulgences.

So, God's faithfulness brings with it not only judgement but also mercy and heartfelt longing – generosity and overflowing blessing – and recognising and embracing this, in turn brings about some of the greatest expressions of human joy as in psalm 23– The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want – you spread a table before me in the presence of my enemies – even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. A feast of God's generosity and blessing for all – reflected if you will in the meal for so many that Jesus makes out of five loaves and two fish.

The way of our lives and our commitments one to another is not always easy – the road is not always smooth but at their very best our human relationships and commitment to one another have these qualities as well, – mercy- forgiveness – generosity and blessing.

How good it would be, if we as the church, could celebrate and encourage faithful relationships of all kinds instead of – whenever personal relationships are under consideration – immediately turning the discussion to sex and who does what with who. It's so narrow and misses so much about how we are touched by grace and led to live gracious lives ourselves.

When we come to consider our reading from St Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, we can see that he has on his heart a much more focussed concern of faithfulness and response that

causes him deep anguish. God is faithful – has always been faithful to his people – despite everything. How is it then that they do not now hear and cannot accept the new word of faithfulness and grace in the life of Jesus the Messiah?

St Paul knows – and we can so easily forget – that the word of God made flesh does not come among us in generic humanity but specifically in Jewish flesh. Jesus, the first disciples and Paul himself are all Jews – members of God’s chosen people. Paul himself was a passionate defender of his people and their faith – himself a persecutor of the early followers of Jesus. He himself must know hard it is for a community that feels itself threatened from outside to hear a new word of renewal and change from within. Nevertheless, these are people with a long and deep legacy, one that is established by God and intertwined with God’s purpose for all humanity.

At his conversion Paul does not suddenly abandon or leave behind his faith, his race, his culture. He is still proud to say of himself that he is a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee by training and education. He may now count this as nothing worth in contrast to the way he knows Christ Jesus and is himself known: but that does not mean that he does not yearn for his brothers and sisters to come to the same insight, new knowledge of God and new life. Indeed, such is the anguish in his heart for them that he could almost wish that he were cut off from Christ – who gives him life – for their sakes. Paul’s commitment to his people is profound and he does not hesitate to proclaim it in the most personal terms in a letter that is going to be read in a church that is increasingly drawn from Gentiles – non- Jews –who still have much to learn about the story of God’s faithfulness to his people through the ages.

Paul reminds his readers and us, that to the Jewish people belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; also the patriarch’s and the messiah. Because of his deepest conviction that God is faithful to his promises and committed to his people – Paul cannot and will not countenance the idea that God has abandoned his own – walked away. Even if his brothers and sisters cannot embrace Jesus as Messiah, God is still faithful – they are still his people.

Later on, in this same letter Paul will refer to the church as if it were wild olive shoots grafted in to share the same soil and nourishment as the cultivated olive tree. The two grow together – rooted in God’s love, mercy and faithfulness. The Christian faith does not appropriate all those things that are promised by God to the Jewish people – Christians participate in them – as if another branch of the same family tree.

We must then always be careful and aware of the dangers of talking about the church as a new Israel – as if God had turned away, become unfaithful to the people he once called. If that were so – how could we be confident that God will remain faithful to us?

We can never afford to neglect this truth – that God is faithful to Jew and Gentile alike. To let this fall from our consciousness leads to the church and our society providing a safe harbour for anti-Semitic ideology and action which has so shamed our past and shames us still today.

We learn from the story of God and the people he calls in every generation – we learn from our own relationships and personal commitments – that the way of love and faithfulness is often costly, sometimes disappointing, occasionally tragic – but is also the only way in which human beings can truly flourish in all our wonderful variety and difference. It is the only way in which we are blessed and able to fulfil what we are all created to be – children of God and heirs of his promises.

Simon

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Nick Rutter, John and Sonia Doidge, Jeyan Anketell.

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Anthony Staples aged 6, Audrey Egleston, Colin Eastwood, Yvonne Harper, Ian and Judith Watson, Alison Cox-Toplis, Julian & Wendy, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Renee Wellings, Felicity Woodfield

Those who have died

Reg Kirk,

ST JOHN

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Post Communion Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord,
the hands that have taken holy things;
may the ears which have heard your word
be deaf to clamour and dispute;
may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope;
and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of
your life;
glory to you for ever.

Amen

CHURCH NOTICES

WORSHIP NEWS

SUNDAY WORSHIP IN CHURCH – PLEASE REMEMBER TO...

- Sanitise your hands on the way in – sanitisers are available
- Keep a proper distance at all times
- Sit only in seats as indicated
- Leave the church as instructed by the clergy and do not stay in church for conversation
- Conversation may continue in the open space of the churchyard
- Take with you the Sunday service sheet when you go
- You may wear a mask if you wish, but it is not required
- Be aware of others at all times
- Children are welcome but there will be no toys or activities provided

WORSHIP BY ZOOM will be on the first and third Sundays of each month. The next services are on.

Sunday 2nd August 6.00pm.

Sunday 16th August 6.00pm

You can join the service from 5.45pm. The service will last about 40mins.

If you have not had a link by Friday at 11am please contact the office office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

CHURCHES OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

St Michael's Lichfield is open between 2.00pm and 4.00pm daily until the end of July. The church will be staffed during opening hours. From August 1st St Michael's will be open on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon's only.

St John's at Wall is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 10.00am to 4.00pm. The church will not be staffed during opening hours.

In both churches there is provision for hand sanitization, cleaning and social distancing. We are delighted to be able to open our churches, but we also want to make sure that everyone is safe.

OTHER NOTICES

FLOWERS AT ST MICHAEL'S Now that we're back in church, if you would like to do the flowers, please sign the rota at the back of church. Flowers will be provided. *Diana*

LICHFIELD FOODBANK In the quarter April 10 June 2020 St Michael's donated the equivalent of 848 meals. Thank you for supporting the Foodbank and please continue to give generously.

BIBLE STUDY THE BOOK OF DANIEL- Everyone is welcome to join the Zoom meeting on [Wednesday 5th August at 10.30am](#) and listen to the members of the ministry team as they explain the history behind and meaning of the stories in this book. [If you would like a link so that you can join in, please contact Angie in the office.](#)

ENGLAND'S SAINTLY LANDSCAPE

Trevor James has recently published his book "England's Saintly Landscape" and has made 20 copies available to St Michael's for sale, at £10, proceeds go into Church funds. To buy a copy of Trevor's excellent book please 'phone Lyn Shiel (01543/320437) for details.

CONGRATULATIONS to Josh Sneddon on being appointed as School Captain at King Edward's for the coming year. He follows Will Stevens and Charlotte Bull, who also held the post. The School Captain is assisted by two girls and two boys in the student leadership team and David Baker and Andrew Dyson have both filled those roles in recent years. David Baker has been awarded his PhD in the past year and Bethan John is close to completing hers. Bethan is also singing in the Chester Cathedral Nave Choir. There are many other success stories and they demonstrate the very high calibre of young people that we have at St Michael's, all helped by our very supportive congregation. *Ted Green*

CHURCHES TOGETHER

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html>

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 2nd August

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John
11:30am	Private Prayer	St John
6:00pm	Evening Worship	Zoom

Monday 3rd August

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
--------	----------------	------

Tuesday 4th August

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Wednesday 5th August

All day	Private Prayer	St John
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10.30am	Bible Study	Zoom

Thursday 6th August

OFFICE CLOSED

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Friday 31st July

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
--------	----------------	------

Saturday 1st August

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
--------	----------------	------

Sunday 2nd August

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John
11:30am	Private Prayer	St John

ST MICHAEL'S STUDY WEEK **LECTURE SERIES**

The Church of England: Where have we come from and where are we going? We are pleased to announce that from 17th – 21st August we will be holding an online lecture series. On each day a speaker will present a paper for discussion which will focus on past, present and future trends on a particular topic.

Each session will begin at **2.30pm**.

Papers will last approximately 30-40 minutes, followed by discussion.

If you would like to register for one or all of the sessions, please email Rev Dr Melanie Clark at revdr.melclark@gmail.com, stating which sessions you would like to attend.

We hope to see you there.

Please see our website for further details:

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/study-week.html>

Monday 17th August: Biblical Interpretation

Revd Dr Stephen Barton: Landmarks in the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians

Tuesday 18th August: Education (School Focus)

Mary Hawes & Murray Wilkinson: Called, Committed and Connected – a canter through 200+ years of serving church, school and community.

Weds 19th August: Inter Faith Relations

Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave: Where we have come from, and where we are going: the church's relations with other faiths.

Thursday 20th August: Social Justice

Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon - Social Justice and Activism

Friday 21st August: Liturgy

Rev Dr Sarah Brush: - ways forward in liturgy in our current uncertain climate