

SERVICE SHEET
15th November – 2nd Sunday before Advent

The 8.00am Holy Communion Service will be shared on zoom

The 8.00 Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion will be live streamed from church. All welcome to connect using the Zoom link. The congregational liturgy will be on the screen, so a service book is not required. The service lasts about 30 minutes.

Zoom Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87558407907?pwd=TFBoMnRoRHkwU3FPLzZhZW1DMXVtQT09>

Meeting ID: 875 5840 7907

Passcode: 019631

10am Service Sheet

Canticle - A Song of the Spirit

**'Behold, I am coming soon', says the Lord,
and bringing my reward with me,
to give to everyone according to their deeds.**

**'I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last,
the beginning and the end.'**

**Blessed are those who do God's commandments,
that they may have the right to the tree of life,
and may enter into the city through the gates.**

**'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to you,
with this testimony for all the churches.**

**'I am the root and the offspring of David,
I am the bright morning star.'**

**'Come!' say the Spirit and the Bride;
'Come!' let each hearer reply!**

**Come forward, you who are thirsty,
let those who desire take the water of life as a gift.**

Revelation 22.12-14,16,17

**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

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

New Testament Reading:1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

¹Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Psalm 90.1-8

¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling-place
in all generations.

**² Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

³ You turn us back to dust,
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'

**⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.**

⁵ You sweep them away;
they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

**⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.**

⁷ For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.

**⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

**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 25.14-30

Jesus said to his disciples,

¹⁴The kingdom of heaven is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." ²¹His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." ²³His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." ²⁶But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Sermon

The Parable of the Talents – Me or Us?

Many years ago in a galaxy far, far away I worked as a school teacher – a teacher of geography. In a social setting people would ask me what I did, and when I told them "I teach geography", it would inevitably elicit one of two responses. The first, acceptable one, being: "I loved geography at school". The second, more predictable, being: "I hated geography at school!" It turns out that geography is a 'Marmite' subject!

On querying why people hated geography the common answer was that it is "all about remembering facts" – carrots in Corsica and the products of Peru, to capture the issue in shorthand. Well, red rag to a bull (though almost never obvious in polite society!). But it did elicit a passionate and hopefully eloquent response that basically as a Geography Teacher I had very little interest in facts per se (capital of Chile anyone?), but that geography is an excellent subject for giving people the tools to *think* – analysing data, weighing up a plethora of evidence to reach a conclusion (think environmental issues), modelling human and economic behaviour, and, as they say, so much more.

Maybe that is why I love the parables of Jesus, because they are not about facts that need to be learned by rote. They are complex, multi-faceted, multi-layered stories. Stories that tap into our

imagination, experience and creativity; stories that on one level use comfortingly familiar metaphors (think Good Samaritan), and at the same time can be puzzling and require work to penetrate for meaning – they make us *think*. There are no simple answers, indeed the parables are beautiful because there is more than one ‘answer’ – and ‘answers’ still to be unfolded. Your answers, or interpretations are as valid as mine!

So, what about this familiar parable, the parable of the talents? It might be important to remember at this point that the parable begins: “the kingdom of heaven is like” The parable is asking us to *think* about the kingdom of heaven. It is stating the obvious to say that Jesus told the parable in a particular time and place, and it is framed in Matthew’s gospel in a particular context. We think of ‘talents’ and may interpret the parable to think about our own particular gifts and skills, and how we might use them in the service of the kingdom of heaven. And that is one strand to explore. Today there’s an alternative, though similar line of thought, I’d like to follow.

A ‘talent’ is also a sum of money. At that time a talent was a HUGE sum of money. Some say fifteen to twenty years’ wages for a labourer. So, each one of the slaves is dealing with a lot of money. Each one has been given huge responsibility in the absence of the master, even if some have more responsibility than others. Huge responsibility to be fruitful stewards. To follow this line of thinking moves the focus of the parable onto the great *responsibility* of each slave to be fruitful for the absent master.

As we are told in the parable, the three slaves utilise that responsibility with different outcomes. When the master returns events take a very dark turn – more horror story than bedtime story. If, and it is very hard not to, we see the master as a metaphor for God, we are faced with a difficult picture of God. It is easy, I find, to focus on the love, grace and mercy of God revealed through Jesus and in many parts of scripture. I find myself averting my eyes, shifting my gaze, closing my mind when confronted with the picture of God as an awesome judge. Yet that is the picture in this parable – the master judges the slaves, and it is not a pretty picture, with much weeping and gnashing of teeth as the unfruitful slave is left outside the kingdom of heaven.

As I said earlier, Matthew sets this parable in a particular context in his gospel – it is set amidst events that deal with God’s judgement and the end times. It is preceded by the parable of the ten bridesmaids (some of whom are not quite ready ...) and next week’s instalment contains the parable of the sheep and the goats, and more eternal separation from the presence of God for some.

The parable asks us to focus on God’s judgement – a phrase that may elicit a communal shiver as we think about it. In this parable I am suggesting that the judgement is to do with how the slaves – how we – work with the great responsibility to be fruitful given to each by God . Yes, some have more responsibility than others, but even one talent in the parable is a huge amount. Huge *individual* responsibility given to each of us to be fruitful in God’s service, and the growth of God’s kingdom values of love, mercy, peace and justice.

I feel myself instantly weighed down by this weight of responsibility, almost unable to move, never mind be fruitful. Yet parables are quirky, invite us to speculate, to open up the unexpected. To ask ‘What?’ or ‘What if?’ What if the slaves had behaved differently? What if, instead of pursuing individual paths they had clubbed together in community and shared their talents/responsibility and shared their ideas in order to be even more fruitful for their master/God. Wow! Anarchy or innovation? Co-operation even, rather than every one for themselves! Truly all in it together? How would that have impacted the final judgement? Would there have been anyone weeping and gnashing on the outside?

Ruth Etchells in her book 'A Reading of the Parables of Jesus' suggests that parables provide a new way of seeing the grace and rule of God; they open us up to the nature and activity of God. In this parable we are asked to focus on the God who judges, the God pictured in the Old Testament who judges and smites. Alongside that we are asked to examine our huge responsibility to be fruitful stewards of all that God leaves in our care – our planet, the vulnerable, those who live in poverty alongside those who have plenty. I am challenged to remember that the picture of God in the Old Testament is the God who works constantly, sometimes in sorrow and mercy and sometimes in anger, to see God's *people*, not individuals take the good and fruitful path. Maybe, in this parable, the thrust of God's judgement is to do with our *corporate* responsibility, to be radical, to pool our responsibilities and our capacity to deal with them; to be humble, co-operative and inclusive to make God's world a more fruitful and less divided place, a place resonant with the values of the kingdom of heaven.

What does that look like? I leave it for you to think about, to imagine, to ponder on a local and global scale. Yet I cannot resist offering a current thought. How would it be if, instead of each rich nation, including our own, scrabbling to secure as many doses of the proposed Covid vaccination as humanly possible for itself, there was another way? A way in which nations of every financial standing worked together, shared the responsibility, to ensure that those in greatest need, not those with greatest funds, received this vaccine across our planet? Radical? Challenging? Ridiculous? The kingdom of God is like this

Oh, by the way, it's Santiago.

Revd Linda Collins

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Martin Dewes, Chris Clayton

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Chris Dickerson, Sonia Doidge, Colin Eastwood, Joseph Harrington, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Matthew and Emmeline and their parents, Ruth and Andrew Martel, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 6, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Audrey Egleston, Margaret Fellows, John Doidge, Yvonne Harper, Brenda Cross & Peter McCree

ST JOHN

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Post Communion Contemporary

Gracious Lord, in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope: bring us at the last to that fullness of life for which we long; through Jesus Christ our Saviour **Amen**

CHURCH NOTICES

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHURCH AND WORSHIP DURING THE PRESENT LOCKDOWN

St Michael's Church Lichfield

The Church will be open for private prayer on Sundays from 12.00 – 2.00pm

Thursdays from 12.00-2.00pm

The church will be staffed and there will be the opportunity to light candles

St John's Church Wall

The Church will be open for private prayer on Wednesdays from 10.00am-12.00pm (this is a correction).

WORSHIP BY ZOOM

The **8.00am Holy Communion** service will be shared on Zoom – see readings sheet for link.

Our regular zoom worship is on the first and third Sundays of each month.

Next regular service

Sunday 15th November 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***

BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Acts: Wednesday 18th November If you would like to join in our Bible Study please contact Angie in the office for the zoom link.

OFFICE – Angie will be working from home during lockdown, so please contact the office via email. office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

ST MICHAEL'S & ST JOHN'S CHRISTMAS BAKE AND DELIVER SCHEME We are hoping to spread some good cheer (and delicious treats!) and reach out to our church and wider parish community with a new Bake and Deliver initiative this Advent. **Would you be willing to help by baking or delivering?** You can volunteer to do as little or as much as you feel able to do - we would be very grateful to have your help! For further details please speak to Revd Mel (revdr.melclark@gmail.com), the churchwardens, or the clergy team.

NO CHRISTMAS CARDS

Because of Covid-19 restrictions it will not be possible this year for anyone to bring Christmas cards to church to be collected by other members of the congregation. Also it will not be possible to hand out cards personally either at the start of the service or outside after the service. Both of these would be in danger of breaking the social distancing that we have in place in church and the rule of 6 outside church.

I am sorry that this is rather a Ba! Humbug! notice but it will be safer for everyone if we all restrict our card giving to those that we can post or personally deliver.

You might like to donate any money you save on cards to the church or a charity.

Simon Baker, Rector

CHRISTMAS FOOD DONATIONS

Lichfield Foodbank is **now collecting for Christmas hampers**. If you wish to donate, please check the item will be in date till after Christmas.

CHURCHES TOGETHER There are new messages on our website

www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html

CHRISTMAS CHARITY COLLECTION DATES 2020 @ St MICHAEL'S

Donations may be brought to church as part of private prayer on Sunday or Thursday

Sunday December 6th

Morning Services

Donations to 'Angel Tree'

Collection of toys and gifts for women for Pathway

Food for the Food Bank.

Sunday December 13th

Morning Services

Collection of toys and gifts for women for Pathway

Food for the Food Bank

Christmas Eve Christingle

Open Church

Donations for the Children Society, white envelopes and a collection plate will be available in church.

All the arrangements are subject to government guidelines and may have to be changed . We will keep you informed.

Brenda Liptrot

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them.

If anyone wishes to donate but is unable to shop for Foodbank, we shop most weeks and would be able to buy items for them. Just let us know 01543 255308

Maggie and David

WARNING!!!

If you receive an email from: **Revd Preb Simon Baker** and the email address is either:
onlinechurch954@gmail.com churchvicar8@gmail.com

Please do not reply or open any attachments. I never use that title in any emails I send and these are not my email addresses.

If you receive any email that asks you to spend any personal money on my behalf please delete it at once.

Simon

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 15th November

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
12pm – 2pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's
6:00pm	Evening Worship	Zoom

Monday 16th November

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Tuesday 17th November

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Wednesday 18th November

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10 – 12pm	Private Prayer	St John's
10.30am	Bible Study	Zoom
1:30pm	Funeral: Brenda Cross	St Michael's

Thursday 19th November

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
12pm – 2pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Friday 20th November

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Saturday 21st November

Sunday 22nd November

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
12pm – 2pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's