St Werburgh’s Sunday Newsletter No.25

The children have returned to school!

Well done to all of the children who have returned to school, or even started school for the first time, in what are very different circumstances to usual. And not to forget all of the teachers returning too, let’s hold them all in our prayers.

Today’s Bible reading

Matthew 18: 15 - 21 NRSV

‘If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

Father Julian’s Reflection

It is easy to think today’s Gospel is talking about simpler times, when church gossip was the biggest thing we had to worry about. So I start today by asking you to think about a resentment you have held against someone else for a long time, or a situation you periodically beat yourself up about and how hanging onto that negativity gives us a sense of purpose. Take a moment, because I want you to be honest with yourself and to have it in mind as you listen or read on……

……..You may have used this hurt to fuel your dislike of someone, or maintain your view of yourself. It is my experience that good Christians often choose to remain bitter or small because it gives us purpose.

So let me say straight up that a purpose rooted in resentment or self-harm isn't really a purpose at all. What it is, is it's a failure to accept the only real power that God gives us, which is the power to forgive and that is what I think today’s Gospel is about.

While we may feel deeply fearful about the future of our land, or powerless about the greed destroying the planet, while we may experience impotence in the face of wars or incredulity at the level of human suffering about which we seem to be able to do nothing, God has given
us the power to forgive. And it's a mighty power that frees us, and each other from the only bondage that we can control.

In today’s passage Jesus repeats those words he directed at Peter that we heard two weeks ago, "Truly I tell you whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

God will give us the power to loosen each other from the grip of resentment. It's a promise. God will give us the power to forgive. So much so that when Peter asks, ‘Lord if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive, as many as seven times? Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but I tell you seventy times seven.”

So I find it deeply sad that the main thing that the church seems to take from today's Gospel is the practice of kicking people out. Excommunicating them, because they have sinned and it's normally a sin of the flesh. It used to be divorced people, these days the heat is on gay and lesbian people who love each other and on transgendered people... And I have had clergy colleagues quote these Divine words at me, 'If the offender refuses to listen, even to the church let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.'

Indeed licence to kick people out.

But how did Jesus actually treat Gentiles and tax collectors? Jesus calls Zacchaeus down from the tree and then he eats at his house. Jesus says that he Syrophoenician woman, a Gentile, is the model of faith, and even Matthew, traditionally the writer of this gospel is himself a tax collector, which makes me wonder if what we're hearing is a glimpse into Matthew's personal experience of forgiveness.

Perhaps when someone refuses to reconcile with us, we are to treat them like Matthew, treat them like anyone else who has not yet realised that they need forgiveness, because their failure just makes them like us and us like them. Just as ugly, just as bitter, just as beautiful, broken vessels all of us, cracked, bearing the water of forgiveness, if we would but let it spill out.

The gift of forgiveness come from God and it is God who empowers us to forgive. It is God who makes it possible for us to be reconciled with each other and when two people have agreed to be reconciled, nothing can stop that reconciliation from happening for it is of God.

That's it. Straight up, it isn’t complicated. Everything else flows from forgiveness: justice, peace, love, understanding, all good things flow from forgiveness. And God gives you the power to forgive, because God has forgiven you first and me. And like Matthew, the tax collector, when we have known how real forgiveness feels, then we are prepared to pass that forgiveness on to the next person, and the next and the next and that is how we change the world.
Together Again

TOGETHER AGAIN - Coming to ticketed services in the garden and parish room during September.

All through this month we will continue with services on Wednesday morning at 10.30am and Thursday evening at 7pm. These will be ticketed services to ensure social distancing and the safety of all taking part. Fr J is on holiday and then working away from the parish until Saturday 26th September. DO NOT CONTACT HIM. To book a ticket for Mass or for any other query from today:

Please contact either the
Warden Kate Leatherbarrow 01332 676106, or,
Curate Kate Smedley 07763473943

Last week's Wednesday morning mass and coffee (and KitKats!)

Kate and Sharon’s Ordinations as Deacon

On Sunday 27th September Kate and Sharon, our curates in the Fellowship, will be ordained deacon by Bishop Libby in the cathedral at 4pm. There will be no morning service (or Zoom coffee) that Sunday from Spondon but we are all encouraged to join them online for the livestream from the Cathedral.

There will be more information available as to how to find that service online nearer the time.

Also on Saturday 26th Fr James (curate of Chesterfield, but one of our own!!!) will be ordained priest by Bishop Libby at 10am, we'll also livestream that service.

Let's all hold Kate, Sharon and James in our hearts and prayers as they approach their ordination in such problematic times.
An exciting week of firsts as Heidi, Maia and Rupert started their first day at school; Matthew, Bea and Noah returned, Jess started “Big School” and Lily and Ellis welcomed their first pets!
Anwen on a blustery day on Cefn Sidan beach near Llanelli

Autumn and Rupert getting sandy toes at Boggy Hole.

Family fun around trains.....

Maia and Noah in Snowdonia

Harriet and CeCe in Norfolk

William and Edward at Twinlakes

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Thoughts from John Hobbs - On holiday in France last year we went to the museum in Lyon and I was struck by this sculpture.

What was the subject? Who could be so distressed and bear the weight of the world on his shoulders? It turns out to be Cain who after killing Abel was exiled and along with his descendants cursed by God. I don’t recall seeing any other portrayal of Cain in churches or museums and I was intrigued that even once I knew it was Cain I still felt sympathy for his plight.
Brain Workout…

Summer Word Scramble

Summer is one of the four seasons, did you know The Eiffel Tower grows in summer? On a hot day the iron from which it is constructed expands so much that the tower can rise by 17cm!

This Summer themed Word Scramble features 10 Summer themed words, maybe this is the last we’ve seen of summer now?! See if you can unscramble them to see what they are.

kapr   _ _ _ _

nh_nsecus  _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

ah_te _ _ _ _

aes _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

todsoour _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

tusogni _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

tei macre _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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Next week’s newsletter please send us any photos or messages to include in the newsletter on stwhelps@gmail.com or post to our Facebook community. It really is a great way to keep connected with each other and to share our news!

Coffee - Do not forget to join coffee and chat on Zoom after Parish Mass (leave a short time in order to make a coffee and then join in!).
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81404163294
Password: ‘church’

Being careful, caring for all @ St Werburgh’s

The answers to this Summer Word Scramble are shown below:

- park
- camp
- sunshine
- sandcastle
- heat
- outdoors
- sea
- outings
- journey
- ice cream