**Sunday 30th August 2020** WORSHIP AT HOME: **Matthew 16.21-28**

Welcome to our act of Worship

Call to worship

‘I am with you to save you and deliver you,

says the Lord….’ Jeremiah 15v20b *(part of today’s set Old Testament reading)*

A Prayer of Approach

Receive us, gracious Lord,
as we come with expectations, and with fears;
with joys, and with sorrows;
with faith, and with doubt.
Receive us, challenge us;
and grant us your peace. **Amen.**

HYMN: Be still for the presence of the Lord...

HP-, MP50, RS-, STF20

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the Wiltshire United Area)

*Prayers of Praise*

Let us pray:
**Praise to you, O God**- for you do not hide from the suffering and hardships in this world.
**Praise to you, O God**- for you understand with those who are afraid and are troubled.
**Praise to you, O God**- for you work in hidden and mysterious ways to bring life out of death, hope from despair, and forgiveness for our sins.
**Praise to you, O God**- for being here in our worship, for being in the difficulties we face, for offering us the opportunity to be made whole.
**Praise to you, O God.**

**Amen.**

*Prayer of Confession and Absolution*

Lord our God, in our sin we have avoided your call.

Our love for you is like morning mist and dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us, bind up our wounds and revive us in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**  May the God of love draw us back to himself, forgive us our sins and assure us of his eternal love through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN Father hear the prayer we offer

HP436, MP132, RS495 , STF518

Ministry of the Word of God

RCL Proper 17 year A

Jeremiah 15.15-21; Psalm 26.1-8; Romans 12.9-21; **GOSPEL Matthew 16.21-28** with special emphasis on:

**24 Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?**

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

Reflection

“But you can’t do that…!” It was a really tough situation that I happened to “gate crash”. The patient on being informed they had a life-limiting condition had decided to receive palliative care. His family desperately wanted him to have any and every possible treatment.

Our Gospel reading today vividly demonstrates that God knows what human suffering is like. It is also a passage which finds a resonance with the above. Peter, to my mind is speaking in love! There again so is Jesus, although to Peter the biting candour of rebuttal must have seemed anything but!!

**‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

Jesus’ teaching throughout this passage, is counter-cultural, turning things on their head, that is why Peter is so confused. And how do those demands sound in a world where we are being forced to re-evaluate everything we thought important in the light of the Pandemic?

Now let us make one thing clear lest there is any doubt. God does **not** send suffering - and that includes Covid! To even dare think otherwise is to misconstrue these words and the whole essence of our understanding of, and belief in God. The burdens, difficulties, losses, and frustrations we encounter are not our cross. They are quite bluntly circumstances of life.

**‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’** What does the cross, Jesus’ cross, mean to you?” What we confess about Jesus and his cross needs to *really*matter and make an impact/ difference for our lives, for they are the axis on how we think about God, and how we live.

Perhaps it is helpful to remind ourselves what cross-carrying is not. Taking up our cross is not the means by which we are made good, acceptable, or lovable in God’s eyes. Nor is it a test of our faithfulness. Remember it is a choice! Ironically, it is a choice for life and not death!

Cross-carrying could mean carrying the burdens of those from whom Jesus releases burdens from. It could mean carrying the ministry of Jesus forward by seeing those whom the world overlooks. It could mean favouring and regarding the marginalised, even when that action might lead to your own oppression. (Reflect on some whom Jesus met: the woman caught in the act of adultery, the cheater Zacchaeus, the criminal on the cross etc., – who are those people today?)

It is worth noting that the Greek word for disciple (*mathetes*) means “student” or “learner”. Let us also remember that a “cross-carrier” life is not a one-time decision but demands and deserves ongoing discernment and deliberation. So make some time to individually think about your “cross carrying” life, you never know what you might discover!

Prayer of Response

Lord, grant me patience to endure,
faith to trust in you,
a commitment to carry my cross,
and hope to believe that all will be well.
In the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

HYMN: In the cross of Christ I glory…

*The author of this hymn knew both joy and pain, not least when 4th Governor of Hong Kong.*

HP167, MP338, RS224, STF-

Our Prayers

To those who carry the cross of persecution and oppression, loving Lord: **give strength and courage**.
To those who carry the cross of anger and abuse,
loving Lord: **give strength and courage**.
To those who carry the cross of pain and suffering,
loving Lord: **give strength and courage**.
To those who carry the cross of isolation and loneliness, loving Lord: **give strength and courage**.
To those who carry the cross of grief and mourning, loving Lord: **give strength and courage**.
Living and loving God,
give wisdom and encouragement
to us and to all your children,
as we seek to take up our cross
and to follow you faithfully. **Amen**.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN The head that once was crowned with thorns…

HP209, MP647, RS257, STF312

Dismissal Blessing

As we take up our cross and follow Christ,

may the beauty of God be reflected in our eyes,
the love of God be reflected in our hands,
the wisdom of God be reflected in our words,
and the knowledge of God flow from our heart,
that all might see, and seeing,  believe. **Amen**

Rev David Coppard

Superintendent @ Wiltshire United Area

Bank Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton

***Our churches may not all be open, but the Church is active and alive.***

*This is service is offered to any and all, with love and prayers.*

Through the Week *Prayer of St Augustine 354-430*

O God, our true life, to know you is life, to serve you is perfect freedom, to enjoy you is a kingdom, to praise you is the joy and happiness of the soul. I praise and bless and adore you, I worship you, I glorify you. I give thanks to you for your great glory. I humbly beg you to live with me, to reign in me, to make this heart of mine a holy temple, a fit habitation for your divine majesty. **Amen.**

**Matthew 16.21-28**

**21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’ 23But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’**

**24 Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?**

**27 ‘For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.’**

***Mini Bible story with actions:***

Jesus was talking to his friends.
*‘Chatter’ with fingers.*
He said, ‘I must go to Jerusalem.
*Point.*
I will suffer and die,
*Make sign of cross and lie down.*
but on the third day I will be alive again.’
*Jump up.*
Peter pleaded, ‘Don’t go!’
*Put out hand.*
But Jesus was angry.
*Wave fist.*
Then Peter knew
*Tap head.*
he should not try to stop Jesus.
*Shake head.*
Jesus was doing what God wanted.
*Point up.*
He said, ‘Pick up your cross and follow me.
*Mime carrying cross.*
One day I will come again with my angels,
*Flap ‘wings’.*
and lead you to my kingdom.’
*Point up.*

**Be still for the presence of the Lord T Be still**
The holy one is here
Come bow before him now
With reverence and fear
In him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The holy one is here.

Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour he is crowned
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant king of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister his grace
No work too hard for him
In faith receive from him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

**Father, hear the prayer we offer: T Sussex**
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength, that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be ;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

Not forever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our Guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Saviour, be thou at our side.

**In the cross of Christ I glory,** **T Adoration**
towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story
gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
never shall the cross forsake me.
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming
light and love upon my way,
from the cross the radiance streaming
adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
by the cross are sanctified;
peace is there that knows no measure,
joys that through all time abide.

In the cross of Christ I glory,
towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story
gathers round its head sublime.

**The head that once *T St Magnus***

**was crowned with thorns** is crowned with glory now;
a royal diadem adorns
the mighty Victor's brow.

The highest place that heaven affords
is his, is his by right,
the King of kings, and Lord of lords,
and heaven's eternal Light;

The joy all of all who dwell above,
the joy of all below,
to whom he manifests his love
and grants his Name to know.

To them the cross with all its shame,
with all its grace is given;
their name, an everlasting name;
their joy, the joy of heaven.

They suffer with their Lord below,
they reign with him above,
their profit and their joy to know
the mystery of his love.

The cross he bore is life and health,
though shame and death to him:
his people's hope, his people's wealth,
their everlasting theme.

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