

Parishes of Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean

Prayers at Home - 21st June 2020

2n Sunday after Trinity

Hymn

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing,
And triumph evermore;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
The God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains
He took His seat above;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail,
He rules o'er earth and Heav'n,
The keys of death and hell
Are to our Jesus giv'n;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

He sits at God's right hand
Till all his foes submit,
And bow to his command,
And fall beneath his feet;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Charles Wesley (1707-88)
Tune: G.F.Handel (1685-1759)

Introduction



6 year old year old Emily Heapy gives an introduction to the Sunday Reflection

'Hello. My name is Emily from Priors Dean. I made these two sparrows for you to enjoy. I hope you like them. Jesus asked the people: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?' 'Then don't worry. In God's eyes you are worth much much much much more than many sparrows'.

It is important to know that I am very important to God and I just wanted to tell you, that in God's eyes, you too are more important to God than you could ever imagine.

And it is because humanity is so important to God that we are called again by bells to worship. Not babies on the video this week but Roger Barber at Hawkley, ringing two bells at the same time. On the video and audio versions of this service you'll hear the bells ringing.

And not any old bells. The two that Roger rings were each cast in 1448. They are both 85 years older than the Church of England and so made a lifetime before Henry VIII introduced a law which meant that all appeals about church matters stopped at his desk and not at the pope's.

Those bells that were cast long before the Bible or prayer books were printed in English; cast at a time when plagues were part of normal life but still, at their great age, they call us today as we work out new ways to worship God and live the Christian life. And all in the knowledge that, as Emily said, we are more important to God than we could ever imagine.

Reading

Matthew 10:26-30; 32-33

Jesus said, "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.

What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Reflection by Paul Goddard

This passage is about making a choice. Not a simple everyday choice, such as what to cook for dinner, but a choice that has far reaching, even eternal consequences. We need to understand the context. The words were spoken by Jesus to his disciples as he prepared to send them out into the world on their mission. It must have been a time of great turmoil for all of them, not least Jesus, who knew very well that the twelve men were going to encounter challenges of every sort as they proclaimed the Word of God.

In the preceding verses, Jesus told them what to say and do as they went about spreading the word in a world that was not necessarily very accepting or friendly. He warned them that they would be in danger and that the message they took with them would be divisive and dangerous in its own way.

Despite this being a mission that was fraught with risk and ridicule, Jesus went on to tell them that what they were saying was the truth and not concealable in the long run. 'The truth will out!' is a phrase we hear and use: the disciples could not hide the message even if they wanted to!

And so it was that he went on to reassure them that, even in the face of all the dangers they faced, they would be looked after by God.

My mum used to say, 'I have known you longer than you have known you'. Such was true – I firmly believe that she could read me like a book and, to her at least, I was always very predictable.

Imagine, then, when Jesus told the disciples that his Father knew them better than they knew themselves, even to the number of hairs on their heads. He was telling them that God knew how they felt and agonised with them in their doubts and fears, but, despite all their misgivings, the 'truth will out' and their work to bring others back to God would be right and recognised.

In short, they were asked to make a choice. Spread the message, despite the dangers, or deny it.

We, in 2020, are commissioned similarly, and although the consequences are perhaps less threatening, we have to make the same choice. God knows we are afraid and full of human doubts, but he promises us eternal life if we choose correctly.

Prayers

God of creation, you know us better than we know ourselves; you value us in ways no human can, you love us because you made us. And then, by your grace you give us choices – help us in the decisions we make this week.

God of beauty, in your world we see the wonders you have made; you trust us to care for your planet. And then by your grace you give us gifts and skills – help to be responsible stewards.

God of compassion, with tenderness of heart you hear the cry of those who suffer. You hear the cries of those losing their jobs and income; of those who fear for their homes and the future of their families. And then by your grace – you call us to be generous with our concern for others.

God of healing and wholeness, you feel the pain of each person who suffers in body mind or spirit. Around the world, you hear the cry of the poor and those who suffer most. And then by your grace – bring healing to them and support the doctors, nurses and carers in their work.

God of peace and justice, you see the abuses of power, the injustices that exist and the actions that cause hurt and harm. You see the unseen, hear the unheard and love the unloved. And then by your grace - you call us to build a fairer world in which truth triumphs over untruth; where integrity, wisdom and honesty are the gifts of leaders and where we, your children each play our part.

God of eternity, you bring peace to those who have died and comfort to those who mourn. By your grace may the souls of the departed, the grieving and the bereaved know that they are more important to you than they could ever imagine.

Merciful Father – Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

As Jesus taught us:

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that 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.

Collect

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Conclusion and Blessing

Hopefully in the next few weeks we'll be able to use our churches more - this week, a small funeral will take place in Hawkley but it's all very different with social distancing and careful controls put in place.

More than half a millennia since those bells were cast, we are still invited back into our churches to pray and to remember just how important we are to God.

So, pop into church if you can. There are areas marked out that we'd prefer you to stay within and hand sanitizer to use. The next challenge will be how to organise services and for that we await the advice of the government, the national church and the Diocese. Keep an eye on the Church News where we will put details as soon as we have them but if you have questions or concerns please don't hesitate to call me.

Let's pray for God's blessing.

May God bless us with wisdom in the choices and decisions of this new week.

May God who knows us better than we know ourselves give us encouragement in this new week.

May God who values and treasures us more than we imagine give us confidence in our journey of faith.

May God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and always.

Amen.

Music on Video and Audio: 'I believe I God', written and performed by Kevin Jacot