

Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean

Order of Service

Sunday Reflections 28th June 2020

Hymn

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Glorious in his faithfulness!

Father like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Widely yet his mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore him;
you behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Words: H.F. Lyte (1793-1847) – Inspired by Psalm 103

Music: John Goss (1800-80)

Introduction

Today is Hawkley's Patronal Festival which is a sort of birthday celebration of a parish church. A celebration marked by the sound of Empshott bells which call us to worship today. Where Whitsun is the birthday of the whole church then a patronal festival is the birthday celebration of the local church which is often, though not always, associated with the saints. Hawkley has two, Saints Peter and Paul and Greatham is dedicated to John the Baptist. Empshott's dedication is the Holy Rood' which associates it not with a saint but with the Cross of Christ and Priors Dean Church, whilst it has its own amazing history doesn't have a dedication so I like to think of that church standing for all of the forgotten saints, the saints that no one remembers.

But what is a saint?

When someone does something which is good or kind, we might say of them "she or he is a saint" and saints of course do good things. But in the early church a 'saint' was really just another word for 'believer'. So all Christians we saints. Some of course stand out but saints, contrary to popular belief are not perfect. Peter is known as the rock on which the church was built – but he also was the one who denied Jesus on the night of his arrest. Paul is known as the extraordinary missionary, but he came first with a history of a cruel persecutor of the first Christians before his change of heart.

Saints are not always perfect, but they do recognise that in their lives they have changed from putting self-first to putting God first.

So, a festival day today for Hawkley which we celebrate in our homes but as we do let's think of all those we normally see on a Sunday who in the ancient sense of the word are our fellow saints!

Susan Sinclair reads the gospel for today and then Elizabeth gives us her reflection.

Reading Matthew 16:13-19

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Reflection by Elizabeth Hawkins

Questions – who, what, why, when, how? We ask questions from a very early age for it is the way we gain knowledge. Sometimes there seem to be more questions than answers, as now with the pandemic, but it is by asking questions and pondering their answer that we grow in knowledge.

'Who do you say I am?' is a question Jesus asks the twelve and us. Of his disciples because he needs to know whether any of them has the depth of knowledge to continue his work, and of us because there's a huge difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. Knowledge and belief are a personal journey. In response to Peter's reply, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus calls him the rock on which his Church will be built.

Jesus is the Church's one foundation but Peter is to be the first 'stone' in the building of a loving community. If we were to build a structure we would probably use local Hampshire materials; flint, chalk, sandstone and brick, but we are called to be a spiritual church, a gathering of local, like-minded people comprising a loving, faithful community. As the community of faith grows we all become the 'stones' of its structure. Like the geological materials we all have different strengths and weaknesses but by holding each other up we become a solid structure in the love of God.

Today is Hawkley's Patronal Festival when we celebrate St. Peter and St. Paul, the two saints to whom our parish church is dedicated. Although very different they both became master-builders in their own right. Peter the 'rock' on which Jesus built his Church, the key holder, the gatekeeper of Heaven. Paul, the indefatigable preacher, cajoler, letter writer, planting church communities around the Mediterranean.

Both had a life's aim to bring people to the knowledge and belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Like them, as a community of faith, our aim should be, by word and deed, to bear witness to Christ in our own environment which has been so evident during lockdown. May such qualities continue to grow and be fulfilled as we aim to establish God's Kingdom of love here on earth.

Prayers

Lord Jesus, you called your disciples to take up the cross: deepen in each of us a sense of vocation. Help us to explore the big questions of life. Who? What? Why? When? How? And help us to help others as they also seek answers to the challenges that life brings.

Lord hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you prayed for your Church to be one and have called out saints to help it grow. We thank you for the lives of Peter and Paul, for the saints of every age and for the saints that we have known and loved; for those who brought us to faith and who have nurtured us on our journey of faith.

Lord hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, help us to build your church as we look forward with questions in our minds about safety in our buildings. Give us wisdom to move forward with caution and care for all your saints.

Lord hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, at your call men and women gave up everything to follow you: bless those who should have been ordained this or next weekend, and in our diocese, be with Hannah, Catherine, Jack and Matt as they prepare now to be licensed as lay workers.

Lord hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you brought healing to many. Be with all who suffer at this time and with those who care for them. Be all who mourn and especially for those remembering Gill whose funeral took place at Hawkley this week.

Lord hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, we pray for your world with all its brokenness and injustice. Give leaders the wisdom, honesty and integrity they need to build a kinder, cleaner and fairer world.

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.

Conclusion and Blessing

The weekends of and around the feast day of Peter and Paul are traditionally an occasion in the church's year for ordinations. Every cathedral would normally be welcoming hundreds if not thousands of people to share in the ordination of new deacons and priests. In our cathedral. Those due to be ordained in Portsmouth are having to wait until Advent but will be licensed as lay workers next Saturday. Ordination services are memorable for all sorts of reasons. At the ordination of deacons the bishop washes the feet of those to be Ordained.



It is to remind them and everyone, that their ministry is about service; it's about seeking to follow the servant ministry of Jesus.

And at the ordination of priests the newly ordained are presented with a chalice and paten



which is a reminder of the sacramental ministry in which they can then lead. There is incredible irony that it is the chalice and paten (or plate) that they and we can't use at moment.

Part of my job is to look after the newly ordained and this time last year I brought that group to Priors Dean vineyard for a service of Holy Communion service led by the bishop.



Communion can and will need to happen in different ways and with the help of God we shall be exploring those questions: who, what, why, when and how with as the church, as the community of saints begins to gather once again.

Greatham's patron reminds us of how it all begins for each and every saint; the moment of turning to God at Baptism. Empshott focuses us on the Holy Rood, the cross of Christ and Priors Dean without its named saint reminds us that it's not just the 'A listers' but that by our baptism we are all saints in God's Church.

And it's because Peter and Paul were great church builders that ordinations happen at this weekend – not church builders in the sense of bricks and mortar, but church builders in terms of people – in terms of saints just like you.

Let's pray for God's blessing.

May God who chose flawed, imperfect and often difficult people like Peter and Paul to build his church inspire us share God's love to all. May God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and always. **Amen.**