

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM
20th September 2020: Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

The **St Francis' APCM** will take place after the service this Sunday, beginning at 11.45am. This meeting will be held both in church and on Zoom if you prefer to be at home with a cup of coffee. A separate sheet with details of the Zoom log-in was sent last week. If you would like the details, please contact Nicky Nightingale on 07771 782914/nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk.

At a future date we will admit the church wardens for both St Francis' and St Mary's in a Sunday service as there will be no Archdeacon's visitation service this year.

On Wednesday 23rd September, **Midweek Communion** will be at St. Mary's at 10.45am. Next Sunday, 27th September, there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St. Francis at 8am and at 10am in St. Mary's. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am. Please note the location of in-person services above is different to that stated in the magazines.

In the evening of Sunday 27th there will be a service for **Churches Together in West Wickham** from 6.30pm at St Francis' Church. This will also be available on-line via Zoom and will be followed by the AGM for the organisation where Hazel will begin her term of office as the Chairman of this organisation. Please do come and support this event either in-person or on-line. The on-line log-in details have been set out on a separate sheet which has been sent round in hard copy and by email.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need desserts (jelly, Instant Whip, sponge puddings etc), tinned fruit, rice pudding, custard, cold meat (ham, corned beef or luncheon meat), toiletries, small bottles of sanitiser. There are large stocks of pasta, long life milk, rice, baked beans and soup, so these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – All files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.

- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – Father Brian D’Arcy where we can put our trust.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Chapel of Royal Holloway, University of London
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.30am and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm from Saddleworth on the Yorkshire/Lancashire borders with Rev Kate Bottley.

Each week our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don’t need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

The **Macmillan Coffee Morning** will go ahead, but will be rather different this year because of the present circumstances. A cake, quiche and sausage roll sale will take place in the gardens at St. Mary of Nazareth Church on Friday 25th September from 10.30am - 12noon. Just pop in to make a purchase to take away, or stay for a while, in which case please bring your own drink. It will go ahead whatever the weather; if necessary bring your brolly and your wellies! Please wear a mask and there will be hand sanitizer at the church gate. If anyone would like to order anything specific, please place your request with Merri Womack 8777 8772 by Tuesday. All donations will be gratefully received. There will be an opportunity to join in this social gathering by Zoom at the end from 11.15am. The details for this event have been included on a separate sheet sent by Rowena and Gifty.

Will members of **St. Mary’s** please note that **donations** can now be made directly from our website using the link on the first page. Bob

For the past few years St John's have held their **Autumn Fair** in St Francis' church hall. This year they have taken it on-line, with many artists, crafters, artisan makers and small businesses from across the country joining in to raise money for Link to Hope, who send shoeboxes of gifts to families in Eastern Europe. These families often have to make a choice between buying food or fuel at Christmas time – buying presents is just not a priority. Here's a link to the site for the Autumn Fair:

<https://linktohopehighams.wixsite.com/autumnfair>

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

Lord God,
defend your Church from
all false teaching
and give to your people
knowledge of your truth,
that we may enjoy eternal
life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Jonah 3: 10-4: end

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³ And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' ⁴ And the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'

⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. ⁶ The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' ⁹ But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' ¹⁰ Then the Lord said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be

concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

Gospel: Matthew 20: 1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴ and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" ⁷ They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go

into the vineyard.”⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, “Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.”⁹ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,¹² saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.”¹³ But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?”¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’

Post Communion Prayer

Keep, O Lord, your Church,
with your perpetual mercy;
and, because without you
our human frailty cannot
but fall, keep us ever by
your help from all things
hurtful, and lead us to all
things profitable to our
salvation;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

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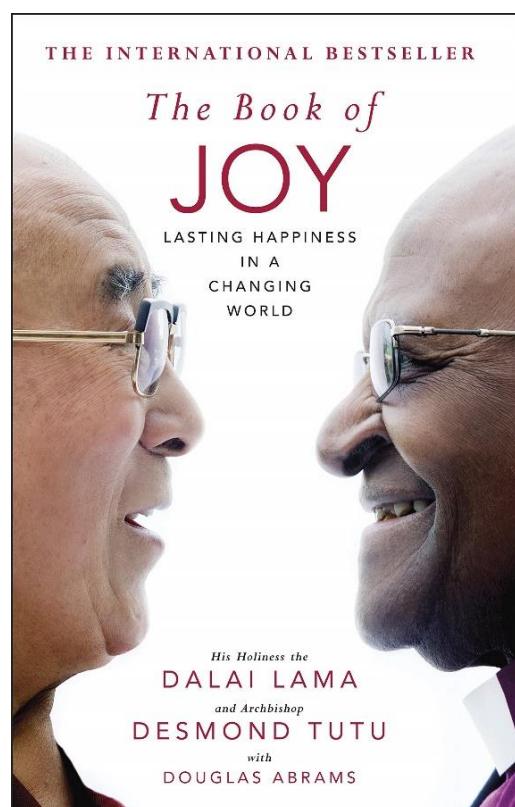
Bible reading from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Talk – Finding Joy

I wonder if you see this glass as half full or as half empty. Let me tell you a famous Chinese story about a farmer who clearly has a glass half full mentality to life:

The story starts when his horse runs away. His neighbours are quick to comment on his bad luck, but he says 'no-one can know what is good and what is bad'. When the horse comes back with a wild stallion, the neighbours are quick to comment again, this time on the farmer's good luck. Again, the farmer replies that no-one can know what is good and what is bad. When the farmer's son breaks his leg trying to tame the wild stallion, the neighbours are now certain of his bad luck, but then war breaks out and all the able-bodied young men are conscripted into battle, except the farmer's son, who was spared because of his broken leg.

This farmer recognised that his own joy was not dependent on what was happening in his life – the externals - but on what his attitude to events is. He found the same amount of joy in whatever was happening.



I am reading this book on joy at the moment. It's a conversation between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu – two great spiritual leaders. They speak about their own life stories and their spiritual practices, as well as the despair of our times (this was before Coronavirus) and they reveal how to live a life brimming with joy.

They meet in Dharamsala in India at the Dalai Lama's residence in exile. He has not been back to Tibet, the country he loves, for 56 years. And yet, he's not sad.

He's got every reason to be sad: at age two he was taken to a 1,000 room palace and raised in opulent isolation, but without parents, siblings or friends. At 15 the Chinese invaded Tibet and he became the ruler of six million people facing a desperately unequal war. For nine years he negotiated with the Chinese for his people's welfare, but decided to go into exile in the face of a potential massacre, travelling on foot with a small group of people over 19,000 foot peaks of the Himalayas into India – a journey that took three weeks.

He, like many refugees, would love to return to his homeland, but he cannot. And yet, he does not worry, he is not sad about his situation.

This is in great contrast to Jonah, who was also away from his homeland, because God had called him and given him a job to do – to preach to the people of Nineveh, so they would repent of their evil ways and God might be prevented from bringing about the calamity that he was planning for them. However, Jonah found no joy in God forgiving the people of Nineveh and was resentful that he'd been involved in this action by being asked to preach to them. He continued to believe that they were an evil people who didn't deserve forgiveness. He was definitely not wanting to be inclusive, as we were thinking about last week.

Jonah had forgotten that we're made in God's image – we are made to forgive and to be inclusive.

This is difference between the Dalai Lama and Jonah. Jonah looked at his own situation and found it to be lacking, making him displeased and angry. In contrast, the Dalai Lama found his joy and his peace not through looking at his own situation but through his attitude towards his connections with others. In the book he talks about looking at others in the world and recognising how blessed he is. For example, when he looks at the situation of the Uighur Muslims, he sees that he's well-treated in comparison with them. He doesn't see their bad situation and rejoice because there are people with different beliefs to him suffering. Also, he doesn't see their situation and become despairing that he himself will never escape his exile, or that the world is beyond help. No, instead he sees himself as having a mutual connection with them and he's able to gain encouragement from their survival in difficult circumstances. He also sees the opportunities that he's been given through his life in exile to experience different cultures, to gain greater scientific understanding and to be introduced to different spiritual practices. He sums up this way of looking at life in the phrase: pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

With Jonah it wasn't just his attitude toward the Ninevites that robbed him of happiness, but later we hear about his attitude towards the vine that God provided him with for shelter and which he then took away the following day. If we're reliant on externals for our happiness, that happiness will be short-lived.

The Dalai Lama talks about happiness or joy being within us, rather than dependent on external circumstances. This is what Christians know of as Christ in me.

Christ connected positively with everyone – no-one was excluded. If we look at our gospel reading, you can see how in this parable, the labourers hired early in the day grumbled when they compared themselves to those who were hired later. They didn't rejoice that the landowner had been generous and had really helped those who'd had

no work during the day – imagine the anxiety and stress that they'd had to endure during those long hours of waiting.

I wonder how you've felt over the past six months. Have you found joy? Lockdown was tough. I don't know about you, but I really don't like wearing a facemask. And when you see some of the responses of others to situations, you might be tempted to give up hope and lose all joy. Do you remember that hoarding that went on in March? And the news is currently full of criticism for our government's inadequate provision of coronavirus testing facilities. But what about all that we can give thanks for? Actually, I've been physically well during the past six months, I've had a safe place to live in, and I've been able to keep in touch with family, friends and all of you in the congregations, as well as others in the community. Lockdown gave me an opportunity to do more reading, and some walking.

Yes, we need to be realistic and recognise the difficulties that coronavirus has placed on many people. But rather than letting that situation cause us more suffering and pain, maybe Christ in us will make our connections with others supportive or encouraging – either for ourselves, or for others, or maybe both. For example, through having compassion on others, we might be moved to help in some way, such as making donations to the Foodbank and so feel better ourselves.

It's this attitude inside that's the source of true joy. And with Christ in you, this is available whatever your circumstances. We don't know how Jonah responded at the end of his interaction with God, because that's not what's important. What's vital is how we respond to the situations that we find ourselves in. It's not about whether you're a glass half full, or glass half empty kind of person, but more about whether we see the world with God's eyes.

As it says in psalm 145, verses 8 and 9:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

This is the result of Christ in us. This is the source of true joy. Amen.

Prayer Pointers

That we may find peace, happiness and joy through our faith in Christ. May we express this joy in our worship together. For all who, at present, find that peace elusive for whatever reason. May we bring them calmness and love.

Give thanks for medical professionals and scientists around the world who are working hard to treat victims of Covid19 and for those researching a vaccine for the virus. Pray for all who are exhausted and worn down by the pressure of this work, especially those who work in our NHS. May their work be blessed and bring healing to our world.

Continue to pray for peace in our world, our communities and our homes. For peace on the streets of our cities, especially for an end to violent crime. Especially we pray for victims of violence and for the families of those who have lost their lives in stabbings and shootings. For the police, magistrates and judges who investigate these crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice.

For our local care homes here in West Wickham and Croydon – for the staff and all the residents. Pray that they may be kept safe from Covid19. For all families of the residents who are anxious about their relatives or friends. May they be reassured through the love and care of the staff

For all those who are ill, remembering those we know and love who are closest to us. Pray especially for all those who are in hospital at this time and those who have been waiting anxiously for consultant appointments. For all undergoing treatments and surgery that they may have a good outcome and be restored to health.