

REFLECTIONS

There has been much talk of slavery in recent weeks, and in our first reading today, Paul uses the word eight times. Of course, in Roman society, slavery was a common practice, and his readers in the fledgling church will have been familiar with it – some will even have been slaves or owned slaves themselves. As he says, he is speaking to them in human – and contemporary – terms to help them to understand point he is making here. He outlines a stark contrast – they are either slaves to sin, or to righteousness. In the final verse, one beloved of wayside preachers, he declares that the result of one road is death – of the other, eternal life.

So what are we to make of this? Quite rightly, we have been urged to lament the sins of our past, which continue to the present day, particularly in relation to racism. Yet do we leave it there? In our context, racism is only one of many ways in which we continue corporately to become wealthy at the expense of others, allowing self-interest to dominate. I am sure that you can think of many contemporary examples, just as I can.

Paul speaks of righteousness as the opposite of sin, and the Bible frequently speaks of righteousness, or justice, as what God demands (*Micah 6: 8*). Gaining at the expense of other people is not God's way. This is true both at the level of society and international relations and at an individual level. Rather than exploiting others, we are to welcome and respect them in God's name.

So Paul urges us to become slaves not of the sin of self-interest, but of the justice sought by God. With Paul, the wayside preacher urges passers by to repent and change their allegiance, giving their lives to God and behaving in ways that flow from that commitment and from understanding of scripture. Yet for many people the change is more gradual: seeing the detrimental effects of exploitation, and changing the ways in which we treat others, can lead to reflection and change at a deeper level. We become what we do, and as we welcome him in the stranger, God works within us to open us up to eternal life. For exploitation does not only disadvantage the one who is exploited – it not only flows from, but also reinforces, spiritual malaise in those who are responsible.

Going deeper

In our Gospel reading, there are echoes of Matthew 25 (31- end). In the context of today's readings, it is worth re-reading Jesus's powerful parable of the sheep and the goats and the challenge within it, perhaps alongside the short book of the prophet Micah.

The words that Paul uses make it clear that we cannot **earn** eternal life, even if we are enslaved to God and follow his path of righteousness. Eternal life is his free gift. By contrast spiritual death is described as the 'wages' of sin, the consequence of seeking our own self interests.

I wonder.... What aspects of our behaviour as individuals are we being called to change in response to today's readings?

OUR CHURCHES' DIARY

TODAY **28th June** **TRINITY 3**

SERVICES ONLINE at www.camvillages.org.uk

This week on YouTube and

9.30 am iChurch on Zoom (contact Alex or Gillian to get there)

11.30 am HOLY GROUNDS on Zoom

THIS WEEK

Wednesday 17th June

9.30 am Holy Communion Alex Jeewan & Caroline Curren
Evening Prayer 5 pm Tuesday-Thursday

NEXT SUNDAY **28th June** **TRINITY 3**

SERVICES ONLINE at ww.camvillages.org.uk

11.30 am HOLY GROUNDS on Zoom

CAM VILLAGES MINISTRY TEAM

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SAFFRON WALDEN & VILLAGES TEAM MINISTRY

The Grapevine

**COVERING THE CHURCHES OF
GREAT & LITTLE CHESTERFORD, LITTLEBURY WITH
LITTLEBURY GREEN, & WENDENS AMBO**

**Welcome to our services today
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

Collect

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading *Romans 6.12-23*

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present yourselves to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel *Matthew 10.40-42*

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple - truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Those who are unwell:

Margaret Reed (Gt Chesterford)
Ken Harvey (Wendens Ambo)

Those who need our support:

Betty Dowsett (Littlebury Green)
Lucy Maskell (Great Chesterford)
Kylie Moore-Gilbert (in prison in Iran)

Friends and families of those who have died:

Ken Jeffery (Littlebury)
Those whose anniversaries are this week

Other topics for your prayers:

- That reaction to racial (or any other form of discrimination) may be thoughtful and without violence
- For ongoing efforts to contain Covid-19, especially in developing countries
- That relaxation of those efforts may not be abused and risk the well-being of others
- Children returning to school or not
- Those with the responsibility for determining the level of lockdown in the coming weeks
- The process of appointing a new Team Rector
- Our churches as we maintain worship in new ways, and look to future patterns of worship when back in church
- Those missing loved ones who have died

VICAR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

This week I have been reading 'I thirst' by Stephen Cottrell, our former diocesan bishop who is about to become Archbishop of York. I always enjoy reading Stephen's books because they get to the heart of the gospel without requiring a theology degree to access it. This means I can recommend his books to anyone and I heartily recommend this one.

'I thirst' is, as many of you will know, Jesus' final words as he dies upon the cross. Jesus demonstrates his complete humanity in requiring a physical drink but this is contrasted with the complete divinity of God lived out in Jesus Christ through his life, death and resurrection. These two words; 'I thirst' shows the incarnation; God dwelling in humanity in all its joys and pains in glorious colour for us all to see.

Bishop Stephen follows the passion story in John's Gospel, penetrating the deep mystery of a God who loves humanity no matter the cost. Each layer of meaning in the simple cry 'I thirst' is an invitation to consider our own lives and think again about what it means to be a follower of Christ in the modern world. As we come out of lockdown, I believe that this more important than ever to consider in our current climate. What does being a follower of Christ mean in the light of the temporary closure of church buildings? Can we be encouraged by the Church continuing to meet, worship and pray during the pandemic. To the latter, I would say a firm 'yes'!

The book was designed as a book for Lent but I found myself drawn to it as I felt spiritually thirsty to hear the gospel in a different way during these strange times. Yes, even vicars need to hear the gospel afresh from time to time! We are all equally in need of God's love and mercy without exception. This book is a reminder of how much God loves us and how He is alongside us in all of the suffering of life. We won't find any answers as to why there is suffering in the world or why so many people are dying during the current pandemic but we will see a God who dwells with us in our suffering and aligns himself with humanity.

In that, I find some of my thirst quenched.

With love,
Alex.

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

O Lord our God, we continue to ask for your comfort and a sense of your presence in these difficult times. We hold before you the families of all who have lost loved ones, whether through violence or illness. Give us also courage and boldness to listen to your voice as we look to the future and seek to witness to your love in our communities.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

THANK YOU . . . to those of you who have responded to Alex's reminder not to forget your church giving at this time when there are no collections. You can now give online too. Just visit the 'giving' section of our website. Thanks, too, to those who have chosen to commit to regular planned giving.

AT LAST. . . As from Monday 15th June our churches have been able to be open for private prayer. All Saints, Great Chesterford, is open each day 10 am - 3 pm; Holy Trinity, Littlebury is open on Wednesdays and Sundays 10 am - 4 pm; St Mary, Wendens Ambo, please ring 01799 218309 for opening details.

WEDNESDAY 9.30 am ZOOM HOLY COMMUNION with Alex Jeewan and Caroline Currer
For an invitation to Zoom services please contact Alex or Gillian (website.camvillages@gmail.com)

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

There is support available in all our 5 communities during the lockdown. Contact details have been circulated. Don't hesitate to get in touch with them or to encourage your neighbours to - whatever the need.

KEEP IN TOUCH

With all that's going on via our churches' website www.camvillages.org.uk especially the variety of services available for us on Sundays; don't forget at 11.30 am on Sundays there's

Holy Grounds

the Cam Villages Churches virtual after service coffee and chat. on Zoom at 11.30 am. For an invite or if you need help get onto Zoom please email Gillian on Website.camvillages@gmail.com and she will get back to you and talk you through.

NEWS

Today!

LITTLEBURY 2020 SUMMER FETE with a difference!

See www.facebook.com/groups/Littleburyfete2020/
Plant stall 1 - 4 pm in the Churchyard

PARISH OFFICE The Parish Office is now closed to visitors but we are contactable by telephone and email as usual.

BISHOP STEPHEN

Bishop Stephen Cottrell will be confirmed as the 98th Archbishop of York at 11am on Thursday 9 July 2020, in a service broadcast entirely via video conference on the Church of England website due to the coronavirus restrictions. Full details at <https://yorkminster.org/latest/confirmation-of-election-of-bishop-stephen-cottrell/>