

St Swithun's Church Family

Trinity 2

Sunday 21st June 2020

Ordinary Time



God's story
Our Story

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** – ideally at 10am on Sunday so that we know we are joining our prayers together but any time is good. Use a candle and a cross if you can find them to give your worship a focus.*

The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.

This is a Service of The Word. It doesn't matter if you are one person or a family together – use the booklet and go through the words – stop and reflect as you need to. We are going to record this service again and add it to the website www.saintswithuns.org.uk There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

Great is thy faithfulness

<https://youtu.be/dTKlqmdfH5k>

All are welcome

<https://youtu.be/js8RtT0mJpc>

O Christ the same

<https://youtu.be/alkuDYf2vxM>

Love divine all loves excelling

<https://youtu.be/ydWDjVWz7gY>

Amazing grace

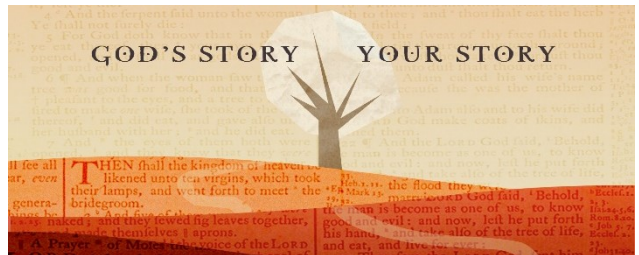
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06wcjxq>

Introduction

Today is the second Sunday after Trinity.

Richard is preaching for us in this worship service and he is looking at God's story in context. An important aspect of living our faith is to understand God's story as best as we can – and not to avoid the tricky bits. Today Richard is looking at a difficult aspect we find in the Bible - head on...

As we look at our lives and our own stories we can place our stories into God's story of faith, hope and love.



The Gathering

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you

Opening Prayer

This day, God of hope,
may we dream your dreams;

This day, God of love,
may we reflect your love;

This day, God of justice
may we do your work;

This day, God of peace,
may we taste your peace.

Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

As we prepare to say sorry to God let us take a moment of quiet to recall our behaviour, our relationships, our attitude over the past few days – what do we need to repent of? What have we ignored or stayed silent on that we should say sorry for?

We are sorry:

For those times we have abused our power to oppress others,
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

For those times we have talked and not listened,
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

For those times we have ignored injustice,
Lord, have mercy.

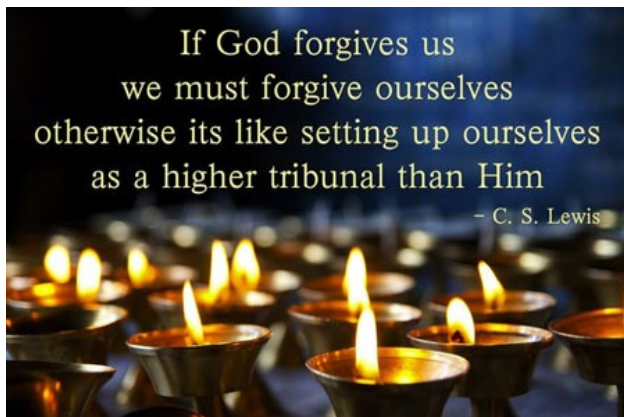
Lord, have mercy.

We know that God forgives us when we say sorry

We are forgiven

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by the Spirit,
and raise us to new life in the risen Christ.

Amen.



Glory to God

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to all people on earth.

Find a way to rejoice knowing that God loves us and makes us whole. Maybe you could have a quick dance to your favourite tune, tell a funny joke, shut your eyes and feel God's loving embrace warming you, picture a place where you feel one with God.

Today we will sing Great is thy faithfulness

**"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with thee;
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.**

"Great is thy faithfulness!" "Great is thy faithfulness!"

***Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed thy hand hath provided—***

"Great is thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

**Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.**

"Great is thy faithfulness..."

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**

"Great is thy faithfulness..."

The Collect

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

All-loving God, we give you thanks for your Holy Word.

Give us open hearts and minds,
give us willingness to be changed by our reading,
and make us hungry for new truths.

Help us to be generous
with those who interpret the Bible differently,
and save us from cold certainty.

Amen.

Psalm *Psalm 139 1-18*

O Lord, you have searched me
and known me.

² You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts
from far away.

³ You search out my path and
my lying down,
and are acquainted with all
my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my
tongue,

O Lord, you know it
completely.

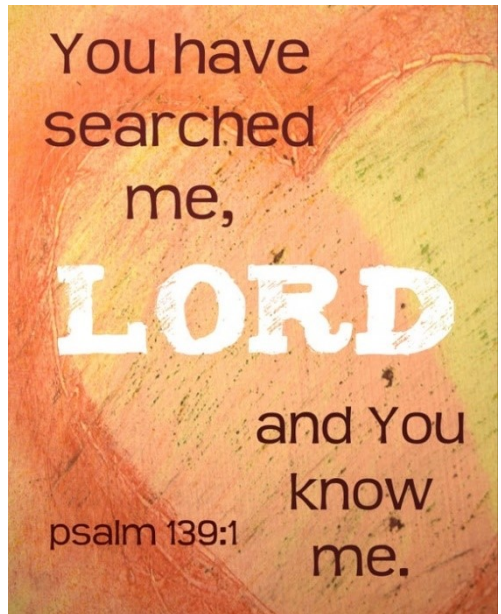
⁵ You hem me in, behind and
before,

and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.



⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
¹⁷ How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸ I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

**Glory to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be forever.
Amen**

The Gospel Reading *Matthew 10: 24-39*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew
Glory to you, O Lord.

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! ‘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 unperceived by 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. ‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a

sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

So do not be afraid;
you are worth more
than many sparrows.



Mt 10:31

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon *Richard Evans*

Have you ever heard someone say that there is an elephant in the room?

It is the idea that while people carry on talking about the things that seem important to them, there is something so much bigger that they are ignoring. It is like being in a room with an elephant...and trying to pretend it isn't there.

Juliet will tell you that I like exaggerations and exaggerated images; so I really like the concept of this illustration of an elephant in the room. I have a feeling that Jesus would have liked it too. He used exaggerated images a lot to get his point across. People with planks of wood in their eye, people swallowing camels... that sort of thing.



I thought about the elephant in the room when I read the Gospel passage for today. How can I start to think about what God wants to say to us about this passage, which is about being good disciples for Jesus, when there is an elephant in the room?

Right at the beginning of the reading, Matthew 10 verse 24, the issue of slavery is mentioned as if it is entirely normal.

How can you get past that? How can I begin to talk about what Jesus is saying to us here, when there is an elephant in the room?

Just as we have been re-awakening to the issues of racism and division; just as we have been hoping for a new start where Black Lives really do Matter; turning a corner as a country and within the church. Why is it now that I get to preach on a passage of the New Testament which mentions slavery? An issue at the very root of racial division to this very day.

Slavery is evil. It is wrong for one person to own another person. People argue in favour of various moral issues, but no one is arguing in favour of slavery. The issue is clear cut. Slavery is wrong.

That brings up a problem for readers of the New Testament. Why is slavery mentioned in several places and not once condemned or even questioned? Why is this moral problem for us not a moral problem for the authors of the New Testament?

I think that it is important that we don't just ignore problems like this when we read the Bible. Some people find the fact that the Gospels mention slavery in such a matter of fact way so distasteful that they are put off finding out anything more about Jesus. If we are to help people like this discover the good news of God's love for them, we need to work out what we think about the problem, not just ignore it.

I said that slavery is mentioned in the Bible in a "matter of fact" way. That is because for people of Biblical times, slavery was a matter of everyday life. It is estimated that in the city of Rome at

the time of Jesus about one third of the population would have been slaves. People became enslaved as a result of being taken captive during wars but others voluntarily became slaves for the sake of education or social status. Slaves had some legal rights in Rome and also in Old Testament laws and it was relatively common for slaves to become freed. Perhaps most importantly for our thinking today, slavery at that time was not generally based on racial prejudice.

However, slaves were owned and had very few personal freedoms. They were subject to abuse of all kinds and were often treated very harshly.

We might still ask why Jesus didn't condemn slavery rather than mention it as a fact of life. Perhaps it would have been helpful if he had spoken out. What Jesus did do was to speak to the culture and social norms of his day. It didn't offend anyone then because slavery was part of normal life. It was as though people had a moral blind spot preventing them from recognising slavery as a problem.

I wonder what people in 2000 years' time will look back at our society and recognise as a terrible evil going un-noticed? Where are our moral blind spots?

Perhaps in 2000 years' time people will wonder why we treated non-human animals without rights? Perhaps they will wonder why we had turned a blind eye for so long to pollution and global warming. Or maybe people of the future will wonder why people in our time spent so much time and money on making devices to kill one another.



So when Jesus spoke about slavery in his stories, I don't think we should interpret this as his approval of the concept of slavery.

In fact, that wouldn't really make sense considering Jesus' principal teaching about a new way of living based on love and closeness to God. Jesus spoke of bringing release to captives and freedom for the oppressed. (Luke 4:18)



The message of Jesus very quickly broke down the barriers between slaves and their owners.

In the young church of the New Testament, it is clear that slaves and their owners were equal members of God's family. It was possible for slaves to become elders and leaders in the church. It sounds strange to us because we recognise the concept of slavery as horrific.

And yet it should also not sound strange to us because we recognise the same teaching that all are indeed equal in the sight of God. The institution of slavery in the days of Jesus did not stand in the way of the love of God breaking down barriers and welcoming all into fellowship.

It is a terrible fact that, centuries later, the acceptance of slavery as normal in the time of Jesus was used as an argument to justify the industrial scale and racially motivated transportation and enslavement of countless black African people. We should be

clear that such a distortion of the teaching of Jesus was and is evil.

Thankfully, the movement that eventually brought an end to that form of slavery was led by people who believed in and lived out the love of God in their lives.

The part of the Gospel of Matthew from which we read today is about the task that Christians engage in as we follow Jesus' command to establish the Kingdom of God. It recognises that the task is hard and often scary. When Jesus talked about slaves not being above their master, he was making the point that when his own teaching was maligned as being evil, the disciples would be seen as evil too.

It is not easy to be a Christian in our world.

Jesus told his followers that there will be opposition. But he also told them that people who believe in and live out the love of God in their lives are precious in God's sight, known by God and cherished by Jesus. We are known intimately and loved totally.

To make this point, Jesus used another familiar illustration from the time, the image of sparrows being sold. These were not for food but were a way for the poorest people to make sacrifices in the temple. Like the concept of slaves at the time, this is another illustration that seems worlds away from our experience today. We know about sparrows but selling them to be killed as sacrifices is strange to us, even a bit creepy.

What I am trying to say is that when we read the Bible we should think about what the sayings, stories and ideas that we read would have meant to the people at the time. Often, the meaning is as clear to us as it would have been then. Sometimes it is worth looking into how the people of the time would have understood it.

If Jesus were teaching today, he would pick different illustrations for his parables and sayings. I bet he would use "the elephant in the room" for example.

He might also have a great new illustration for the story we call the “Good Samaritan”.



I wonder how many people would have passed by the injured white protester at last weekend’s clashes in London. The black man who scooped him up and carried him to safety was likely to be his natural enemy. The photograph of this event has rightly been seen all over the world as a sign of hope. A story to make you think of demonstrating kindness and being a good neighbour. A story like the Good Samaritan.

When Jesus told his followers about those sparrows, he wanted his hearers to know that each of them was known to God. This is something that we, like them can begin to grasp right here and now. God’s love and care for every one of us is unending, enduring and unconquerable.

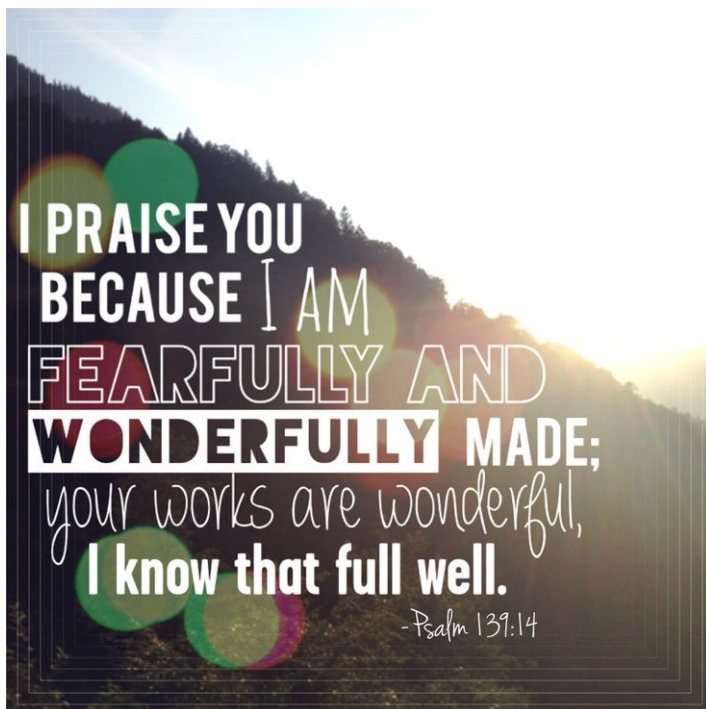
That is our message and that is our comfort as we build the Kingdom in our world.

Amen

Profession of Faith

We remember that we are joined together as a family despite not being able to meet in person at the moment – our faith holds us all – whoever we are, however we come to God:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**



Prayers

Let us pray

Loving God, help us to remember that your love is powerful, that you love us as a Father. Guide all leaders who hold the most power in our world and help us all to use whatever power we have to bring justice, peace and hope to our world and our lives. We pray especially today for our global neighbours most affected by Black Lives Matter, coronavirus and poverty.

Today on Father's Day, we give thanks for all in our world who care for others. We also hold before you all those who have complicated and broken relationships. Heal our divisions and bring us perfect peace.

God of glory

Grant us your peace

Loving God, we pray for the Church, for all those who lead us, for St Swithun's and all who are enabling the Gospel to be lived and proclaimed in Hither Green. We pray especially for all groups unable to meet and those in our wider church community who are feeling isolated and lonely. In courage and gentleness, may our church use its influence wisely for the flourishing of the Gospel.

God of glory

Grant us your peace

Loving God, we pray for our community, for those who live and work in our parish. Especially today we pray for those in our neighbourhood who are struggling without the resources they need and for those anxious about the future. We remember those continuing to volunteer to support those in need in our area and especially for Lewisham Local and those helping their operation. May we all remember to serve you with our time as well as our resources.

God of glory

Grant us your peace

Loving God, we pray for those who are in particular need – for the broken-hearted and the broken-spirited, for those who are unwell, or anxious about the health of their loved ones, for those who are deeply affected by the isolation and concerns of physical distancing. We especially remember today Rossy and family, Taneisha, Talabi, Kevin, Elisabeth and family, Ivy, John, Lena, Shonette, Susan, Margaret, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen. Bring them healing and wholeness and help us to care for others.

God of glory

Grant us your peace

Loving God, we thank you that you call us out of death into life which is eternal. We remember before you today all those who have died recently ... Oscar Kissi-Debrah, George, John and Roy and all who we have loved and who are now no longer on earth.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord

And let light perpetual shine upon them

Merciful Father

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



The Prayer Jesus taught us

Rejoicing in God's new creation, we pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**

The Peace

God is love and those who live in love live in God
and God lives in them.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Who could you share God's peace with?

Spend some time planning a deliberate act of peace.



Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

May God bless us;
may God keep us in the Spirit's care
and lead our lives with love.
May Christ's warm welcome
shine from our hearts
and Christ's own peace
prevail through this and everyday.
May the God of love,
Creator, Friend and Spirit
Be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

The Dismissal

Open our eyes and ears
to show us where love and hope and faith are needed.
Let us go in peace
to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ.
Amen.



Notices:

- The Church will be open for private prayers from July 1st according to government and church guidelines – it will be 10-11am on Wednesdays and Saturdays initially – thank you to those who have offered to help with this – we will be in touch soon with more information.
- In the absence of foodbank collections Olivia invites us to donate online <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/make-a-one-off-donation/>
- If you know of anyone in any need – please let Mother Juliet know as we are working with others who can help.

Birthdays / celebrations:

Happy Birthday to everyone whose birthday it has been recently. Alan Yowann is celebrating his name day on 24th June (the birth of St John the Baptist – Yowann being John in Alan's language) – that means that is only 6 months until Christmas Eve – counting down to Christmas already!



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**Faith, hope and love
in Hither Green**