

St Mary's Weekly News

8th March 2020

The Sermon on the Mount
One of a series of frescoes painted by
Fra Angelico for the monks of the
Convent of San Marco in Florence



Worship this Sunday: The Second Sunday of Lent

8.30am Holy Communion (Traditional Language)

Preacher: The Vicar

9.30am Bible Study Group in the Crypt

11.00am Parish Eucharist with Godly Play

President & Preacher: Reverend Cathy Wiles, Mental Health Chaplain

Morning Sermon Theme: Christianity & Mental Health:

Finding Meaning & Value

Morning Readings: [1 Kings 19:1-16a](#); [2 Corinthians 5:16-20](#); [Luke 19:1-10](#)

6.00pm Short Evening Prayer followed by Lent Course

A Rational Faith? Christianity & Philosophical Enquiry

Second Talk: Dealing with Dawkins: The New Atheists

Speaker: Dr Paula Boddington, New College of the Humanities

This Week's Focus Bible Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

See later in the newsletter for an extended article about reading the Bible.



This Week at St Mary's

The Parish Office is open 9.30am to 12.30pm weekdays.

Reverend Aaron Kennedy is unavailable this week

Monday 2 nd March	Morning Prayer at 8.30am Bellringing Practice at 7.30pm
Tuesday 3 rd March	Holy Communion at 8.30am Holy Communion at Battersea Place at 11am
Wednesday 4 th March	Morning Prayer at 8.30am PCC Fabric Working Group meets at 7.30pm in the Crypt
Thursday 27 th February	Holy Communion at 12.30pm Bible Study Group in the Upper Vestry at 1.20pm Mission Action Planning Group meets at 7.30pm in the Crypt

Sunday 15th March

The Third Sunday of Lent

8.30am	Holy Communion (Traditional Language)
9.30am	Bible Study Group in the Crypt
11.00am	Parish Eucharist with Godly Play <i>Preacher at Morning Services: The Vicar</i> Sermon Theme: Christianity & Mental Health: "You Lifted Me Out of the Miry Bog": Handling Depression & Anxiety
6.00pm	Short Evening Prayer followed by Lent Course A Rational Faith? Christianity & Philosophical Enquiry Third Talk: "She's Just a Shell Now": What Makes a Person? Speaker: Dr Paula Boddington, New College of the Humanities

Advice on Coronavirus

Current Government advice is that individuals should follow good hygiene practices including: carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and binning the tissue; washing hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds) or using sanitiser gel to kill germs.

The advice given to churches is to follow best hygiene practices. If you are suffering from a cough or a cold you are advised to refrain from hand-shaking during the peace and to receive Communion in one kind only (i.e. just the bread).

There is currently no advice that would require the withdrawal of the common cup at Communion. Those administering Communion should wash their hands, preferably with an alcohol-based sanitizer.

Intinction – where either the priest or the communicant dips their bread into the wine – is not recommended as this represents an infection route as well as a risk to those with certain allergies.

We at St Mary's will follow the best advice given to us and if any further change to our practice is necessary, will take steps to do so.



For Your Prayers

The sick and those in need: Gary Barton, Paul Willett, Siân Evans, Popi Taherimond, Amelia Zoggani, Gerry O'Shaughnessy, Harry Scott, Kathleen, Nicola Brooks, Lulia Walsh, Christopher Willis, Ellie and Comfort Moses.

The recently departed and their families: Di Bailward, Paul Woodford, Satarina Iffrung, Jean Daffy, Billie Forbes, Sarah McAlpine, Peggy Drew, Judith Garziglia, Jean Gallrey, Vera Balkwill, Gabriel Guagetti, Daphne Lovett and

This Week's Notices

Lent at St Mary's:

It's not too late to begin a Lenten discipline.

Please take a copy of our Lent Brochure from the back of church today.

Regular Giving: St Mary's Church Council has set itself a goal of increasing our regular giving by £20,000 this year, to fund a gap between what is coming in and what is coming out. If you are not yet a regular giver, or do not yet give tax-efficiently, please see the light blue coloured information sheets at the back of church which explain how you can help us do these things. Thank you.

Lent & St Mary's Rule of Life: this season is the perfect time to explore St Mary's Rule of Life. Take a brochure from the back of the church and have a read or speak to one of the clergy if you would like to talk through this approach to Christian living: they would only be too pleased to help.

Palm Sunday 5th April. St Mary's Choir will be performing Duruflé's beautiful *Requiem* on at 6pm on Palm Sunday in a devotional concert with small orchestra. If you would like to sing in this, and are not a regular choir member, you are welcome to do so, but have a word with Will Wallace. You will need to come to choir

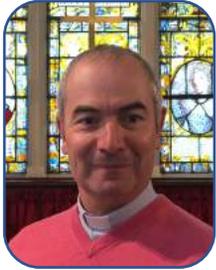
practices!

Summer in the Square: We have begun to plan for this event to be held again this year on Saturday 19th September to coincide with Open House Weekend. We are looking for volunteers to assist in the following role: Chief Coordinator on the Day, Treasurer and Volunteer Coordinator. If you can help with either of these, please contact Simon.

First Communion Classes & Confirmation Preparation: If your child (aged 7 or over) would like to be prepared to receive Holy Communion or if you would like to be prepared for confirmation as an adult, please let one of the clergy know. We will try and put some preparation in the diary for the coming months.

Refurbishment Snagging: If you discover anything that looks like a snag to do with the refurbishment, please email David in the Office about it to get it addressed.

Easter Eggs Traidcraft Easter Eggs are available at the back of the church. The price is £5 per egg which includes a 50p donation to Glass Door charity.



Called to Pray

Canon Simon Butler

It's been a while since we introduced the concept of a Rule of Life at St Mary's. In this season of Lent, I'm exploring with you the six

themes of the Rule, in the hope you might consider taking up its challenge in the coming days.

Called to pray, read, learn.

Sent to tell, serve, give.

These simple words form St Mary's Rule of Life, which tells us something about what we in this local church are trying to do to give shape to our Christian life, as individuals and as a community. If you want to know what this church stands for and what it means to belong here, we say that we are seeking to live by this Rule. It's not compulsory, but it is a pattern that we think is helpful to shape Christian living in our complex urban lives, when we are gathered as God's people on a Sunday or in the week, or when we are scattered in our places of work, recreation or family life.

Called to Read

Augustine of Hippo was a bright young man, and a bit of a wild child. As he studied philosophy, and became aware of his mother's prayers for him, he questioned his riotous youth. Aged 31, in turmoil of heart, he experienced a deep Christian conversion, and eventually became one of the very greatest Christian leaders of any age. He did so because he read. He read what? He read Mark's Gospel, part of Holy Scripture. In his "Confessions" he wrote he heard a child saying "Take up and read." This is a wonderful image. The Bible is a gift for anyone who wishes, as Jesus says, to turn their lives around and become as a little child. We may occasionally differ about the interpretation and meaning of the Bible, but this is a gift from God as we learn together. **There are different ways of reading the Bible.** Some will have

regular patterns of Bible reading already, perhaps at the offices of the Church, or through a regular quiet time.

If you don't have a regular pattern of Bible Reading, don't worry. There are lots to choose from. It's not necessarily helpful to open the Bible at the beginning and read to the end. A good place to start is in the Gospels, like Augustine. As part of being a disciple at St Mary's, we read the Scriptures daily. But watch out: reading this can be dynamite!

Frederick Buechner on The Bible

There are people who say we should read the Bible as literature. The advice has a pleasantly modern and reasonable ring to it. We are all attracted. Read the Bible for the story it tells. Read the King James Version especially for the power of its prose and the splendour of its poetry. Read it for the history it contains and for its insights into ancient ways. Don't worry about whatever it's supposed to mean to religious faith. Don't bother about the hocus-pocus. Read it like any other book.

The trouble is it's not like any other book. To read the Bible as literature is like reading *Moby Dick* as a whaling manual or *The Brothers Karamazov* for its punctuation.

Like *The Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote*, *Paradise Lost*, or Proust, the Bible hangs heavy on many a conscience. One ought to have read it if not for religious reasons, then simply because it has left so deep a mark on Western civilization. One usually hasn't. Some parts of Genesis maybe, a handful of Psalms, a sampling or two from the Gospels. And that's about it.

There are good reasons for not reading it. Its format is almost supernaturally forbidding: the binding rusty black like an old tuxedo, the double columns of a timetable, the print of a phone book, cluttered margins, and a text so overloaded with guides to pronunciation ("Je'-sus came from Naz'-a-reth of Gal'-i-



and so befouled with inexplicable italics ("No'-ah only remained *alive*, and they that were with him in the ark") that reading it is like listening to somebody with a bad stutter. More often than not the poetry is printed as prose, and poetry and prose alike are chopped up into entirely arbitrary chapters and verses, so that one of the major poems in the Old Testament, for instance, begins toward the end of Isaiah 52 with (in some versions) nothing to suggest that Isaiah 53 is a continuation of it or that it is a poem at all.

There are other reasons for not reading the Bible. It not only looks awfully dull, but some of it is. The prophets are wildly repetitious and almost never know when to stop. There are all the *begats*. There are passages that even Moses must have nodded over, like the six long chapters in Exodus (25-30) that describe the tabernacle and its workings all the way from the length, breadth, and composition of the curtains down to the colour and cut of the priest's ephod and a recipe for anointing oil. There are the lists of kings, dietary laws, tribes, and tribal territories. There is the book of Leviticus and most of the book of Numbers. There are places where the parallelism of Hebrew poetry ("Pour out thy indignation upon them / and let thy burning anger overtake them. / May their camp be a desolation, / let no one dwell in their tents") becomes irresistibly soporific. There is the sense you have that you know what the Bible is going to say before it says it. There are all those familiar quotations. There is the phrase "the Good Book." Give me a bad book any day.

There are still more reasons. The barbarities, for instance. The often fanatical nationalism. The passages where the God of Israel is depicted as interested in other nations only to the degree that he can use them to whip Israel into line. God hardening Pharaoh's heart and then clobbering him for hard-heartedness. The self-righteousness and self-pity of many of the Psalms, plus their frequent vindictiveness. The way the sublime and the unspeakable are always jostling each other. Psalm 137, for example, which starts out "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept" and ends "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" Or Noah, the one man left worth saving, God's blue-eyed old sailorman, getting drunk in port and passing out in a tent where his son Ham beholds his shame. Or the book of Deuteronomy, where there are laws thousands of years ahead of their time, like the one that says a newly married man is exempt from military service for a year so "he can be happy with the wife whom he has taken," side by side with laws that would make Genghis Khan blush, like the one that says Israel is to destroy conquered peoples utterly, making no covenants with them and showing no mercy. Or even Jesus of Nazareth, the same Jesus who in one place uses a Samaritan of all people – a member of a hated tribe as the example of a man who truly loves his neighbour, and in another place is quoted as telling a Canaanite woman who came to him for help that it was not fair for him to throw the children's food to the dogs.

In short, one way to describe the Bible, written by many different people over a period of three thousand years and more, would be to say that it is a disorderly collection of sixty-odd books, which are often tedious, barbaric, obscure, and teem with contradictions and inconsistencies. It is a swarming compost of a book, an Irish stew of poetry and propaganda, law and legalism, myth and murk, history and hysteria. Over the centuries it has become hopelessly associated with tub-thumping evangelism and dreary piety, with superannuated superstition and blue-nosed moralizing, with ecclesiastical authoritarianism and crippling literalism. Let them who try to start out at Genesis and work their way conscientiously to Revelation beware.

And yet...



And yet just because it is a book about both the sublime and the unspeakable, it is a book also about life the way it really is. It is a book about people who at one and the same time can be both believing and unbelieving, innocent and guilty, crusaders and crooks, full of hope and full of despair. In other words, it is a book about us.

And it is also a book about God. If it is not about the God we believe in, then it is about the God we do not believe in. One way or another, the story we find in the Bible is our own story.

But we find something else in it too. The great Protestant theologian Karl Barth says that reading the Bible is like looking out of the window and seeing everybody on the street shading their eyes with their hands and gazing up into the sky toward something hidden from us by the roof. They are pointing up. They are speaking strange words. They are very excited. Something is happening that we can't see happening. Or something is about to happen. Something beyond our comprehension has caught them up and is seeking to lead them on "from land to land for strange, intense, uncertain, and yet mysteriously well-planned service."

To read the Bible is to try to read the expression on their faces. To listen to the words of the Bible is to try to catch the sound of the queer, dangerous, and compelling word they seem to hear.

Abraham and Sarah with tears of incredulous laughter running down their ancient cheeks when God tells them that he is going to keep his promise and give them the son they have always wanted. King David, all but naked as the day he was born, dancing for joy in front of the ark. Paul struck dumb on the road to Damascus. Jesus of Nazareth stretched out between two crooks, with dried Roman spit on his face. They are all of them looking up. And listening.



Contacts

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Reverend Aaron Kennedy

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Development & Mission (Day Off: Friday)
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The clergy are always ready to visit, or to offer confidential pastoral care. Please contact them directly. If you hear that a member of the parish is unwell or needs a visit or a call from one of the clergy, please let the clergy know. They may not have heard and are grateful to be kept informed.

Giving To St Mary's

We invite and encourage everyone who considers St Mary's their spiritual home to make a financial contribution to our work.

The best way of doing this is through setting up a Standing Order, so that your giving doesn't depend upon how often you are able to get to church.

To do this, just use these details

**Account Name: Battersea Parish Church PCC
Sort Code: 502101
Account Number: 82127468**

If you would like to Gift Aid your donation, please contact Chris & Erica Sage via the Parish Office