

Bulletin for Sunday 21 August 2022

Good morning friends.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Thou whose almighty word (R&S 38)

Prayers: Creator God, we thank you for:
the smell of summer rain in a dry garden;
the taste of fruit freshly picked;
the colours of butterflies, the hum of bees,
and the warmth of the sun...
As our senses are open to your world
may our hearts and minds be open to you.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and on everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Isaiah 58: 9b-14 and Luke 13: 10-17

Reflection:

In previous generations - and, indeed, until quite recently - it was considered very important to wear your 'Sunday best' clothes to church, despite them being less comfortable, often, than your everyday clothes. The games you played (or didn't play), the meals you ate.... so much about Sundays was different. It might be better than other days of the week (particularly the food!), but all too often it seemed to be more restricted, involving curtailed activities and uncomfortable clothes which had to be kept preternaturally clean. Was this really what God wanted? What did it have to do with remembering that God rested on the Sabbath, and blessed it as a day of rest? According to the prophet Isaiah we should 'call the Sabbath a delight'.

Isaiah's argument, that there is no point in 'keeping the Sabbath' if we're not aware of the needs of our neighbours, or we ignore the poorer members of our communities, is taken up by Jesus. When his compassion, and then his practical, healing help, is condemned by bystanders who feel no empathy for the crippled woman, Jesus points out their

hypocrisy. They understand that animals must be cared for every day, and yet they forget that the same is true for people. He feels for the woman's pain, and wants her to be free to live her life fully. This healing isn't the sort of self-serving work which Isaiah condemned as particularly inappropriate on the Sabbath, but an example of the liberating priorities which characterise the kingdom of God.

Are there needs in our local communities which we are missing? People who are invisible, or who are prevented from living as fully as they might? May God help us to be aware, and to act with compassion...

Hymn: The kingdom of God (R&S 200)

Prayers: Loving God, we pray for your world,
 and for your children everywhere...
 We hold before you all those in the news,
 including the victims of war and conflict...
 those struggling to afford food...
 and students waiting for exam results...
 We pray too for all the forgotten people,
 such as the housebound, and children in care...
 for those who are lonely or anxious or afraid...
 We hold before you our communities,
 and all those we love and especially care about...
 In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers,
 including the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: God is love: let heaven adore him (R&S 95)

Blessing: May we make time to see the needs around us;
 and may the blessing of God,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 be with us and with all those we love,
 this week, and always. Amen

There WILL be a Sunday at Six service on Zoom service this evening at 6pm as usual.
But during August these are on alternate weeks only - so none next week (28th).

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