

Bulletin for Sunday

21st June 2020

Dear Friends

Good Morning! Today is Fathers Day, which I had always thought was a modern, commercial invention, but now discover has been celebrated in some parts of the world since the Middle Ages in honour of Joseph, Jesus' father. The idea of fatherhood can be a very positive one... or a very problematic one, depending on experience. Families are seldom straightforward and perfect, and our gospel reading this morning reflects some of that complexity and tension in Jesus' own words.

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth (Rejoice & Sing 41)

Prayer: Gracious God, we praise and worship you!

We are separated... and yet in spirit we worship together -
may we have a sense of our friends around us.

We thank you for our church family and all it means to us;
we thank you for all you have given to us,
and ask your blessing on the time, energy, talents and money
that we give in your service.

Bless us with your presence
Speak... and help us to hear... In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Matthew chapter 10 verses 24 to 39

Reflection: Families are important to us - we easily take them for granted, but the lockdown has made us realise how much they mean. When I was learning to read we had books about children and their families - Janet and John, or Peter and Jane - who were supposed to be very like us, with a 'conventional' family structure. In reality families are more complicated than that. Many children shuttle between parents; some find themselves in care, needing to build new families and safe relationships. As adults we can choose (perhaps to an extent unknown in the past) who we want in our families - who we really respect, and love and care for.

Jesus seems to have had a slightly rocky relationship with his own family; on at least one occasion they tried to stop his itinerant preaching lifestyle, alleging that he was mentally unwell. In this reading we hear him warning his disciples that they too would be bound to experience conflict between their calling as disciples to the family of his followers, and their loyalties to their human family - their obligations in that culture.

Is it easier for us, in a society which accepts that we may belong to more than one family at a time, to balance our relationship to our earthly family with our relationship to Christ? Or is the potential for misunderstanding and conflict still as great? Jesus' warning is against allowing our commitment to our nearest and dearest to obscure the bigger picture - to stop us developing our

relationship with God; to stop us becoming fully the people we are called to be; to stop us seeing that beyond our personal families we are firstly and wonderfully members, through God's grace, of a huge family whose Father is God. Amen

Hymn: Will you come and follow me (R&S 558)

Prayer: God of compassion
While our ideas of family may be limited by blood or marriage,
by chosen relationships or by geography,
every one of us is a child of God...
We hold before you your children who are:
in need; in pain; in fear; or lonely;
those who are sick; those who are grieving....
Your children are our siblings - so may we care for all...
We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided (R&S 603)

May we be a blessing to all those we call family...
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and every week. Amen

Do you know the hymn by Brian Wren, 'We are your people'? It's at number 483 in Rejoice and Sing, and although it's not an easy hymn to sing I might well have chosen it with a real life organist because I really like the words. Sadly there are no very good recordings of it online (or none that I could find).

Please note: there will be no evening service on Zoom tonight as several of those involved have commitments with their own families, but we hope to resume next week.

Please let me know of any news or prayer requests to be shared.
Every blessing for the week ahead.

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