

Bulletin for Sunday 12th September 2021

Good Morning, Friends. I hope you enjoyed the sunshine for a few days this week! This is the Sunday of the year which is designated as 'Education Sunday', when we give thanks for educational opportunities and remember how important education is to all of us.

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

Hymn: I will enter his gates (R&S 386)

Prayer: God of life and love, thank you for
the fascinating and wonderful world around us,
and for the senses through which we experience it.
Especially today, we give thanks for education -
the things we've learned or come to understand,
from teachers and others, from books, from life....
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give, in your service,
now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Isaiah 50: 4-9a and Mark 8: 27-38

Reflection: Jesus almost sounds as though he wanted some feedback about his teaching. How were people responding to it? How many understood what he said and did: his parables, his healings and his interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures? Peter first appeared to be the star student, giving the daringly correct answer to Jesus' question. Yes, Jesus was indeed the Messiah! But when Jesus unpacked the implications, making it clear that while he was the Messiah, he certainly wasn't the sort of warrior king that they had expected and hoped for in that role, Peter's astonished and appalled reaction put him at the bottom of the class! The disciples still had a lot to learn. The way that Jesus would take is difficult both to understand and to follow, for them and for us. But for those who do follow it, Jesus gives an assurance that it leads to life.

I love the idea that each morning God wakens us to listen and learn, as Isaiah puts it in verse 4. We can never know what the day will bring, but I believe that if we are aware of God and open to learning and growing through the experiences of the day (setting our minds on divine things, as Jesus told Peter), then we will be led in the way that God wants us to go. That doesn't mean we go around with our heads in the clouds, unaware of real life around us (Jesus certainly didn't do, or teach, that), but that we listen for God's voice in and through all the ups and downs and twists and turns of the day.

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

Prayer: God who calls, you know us each by name.
As we learn about Jesus and what he said and did,
help us to understand about your love, your will for us,
your way and the path we are called to follow....
We pray for schools, colleges and universities,
for all who teach or support and for all who learn.....
We pray too for those who want and need to learn
but don't have access to the education they need.
We hold before you our loved ones, and ourselves:
Loving God, hear all our prayers,
spoken and unspoken, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: You shall go out with joy (R&S 415)

Blessing: May we never stop listening and learning;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
now and always. Amen

We all have a part to play in caring and keeping each other safe; so please continue to wear masks in church, and let us know if you test positive for Covid after attending worship or another event in our buildings.

And bear in mind, sadly it's impossible to make our churches completely risk-free.

There will be an evening 'Sunday at Six' service on Zoom at 6pm as usual. All welcome.

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