

St David with St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter Parish Newsletter for 4 February 2024 – 2nd Sunday before Lent

This morning's gospel reading - the first 14 verses of St. John's Gospel - may come as something of a surprise as it is so associated with Christmas services. However, it is very helpful to consider this passage outside the Christmas context and to see how this prologue to St. John's Gospel introduces so many of the themes that will be developed by John such as light and darkness, rejection and acceptance, creation and re-creation.

Ian

Our services this week:

Sunday 4 February 2024 – 2nd Sunday before Lent

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant Ash Leighton Plom and preacher, Ian Cartwright (live-streamed via St David's Facebook page)

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's Church with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Mason

4pm Thrive with Ash Leighton Plom

6 pm Evensong with Benediction at St Michael's, Nigel Mason

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church led by Ian Cartwright

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 6 February (Martyrs of Japan, 1597) 9:30-10 am Morning Prayer on Zoom. Please join us using this link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/79947675846?pwd=xwh2vwYTTGMF1t9RifaEBHQaOoMUWO.1>

Meeting ID: 799 4767 5846

Passcode: 4JyeYv

We use this app for our prayers – details here or via a

phone: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/daily-prayer-app-and-podcast>

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live-streamed via Facebook [facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter))

Thursday 8 February 10.30am Holy Communion at St David's Church

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live-streamed via Facebook)

Sunday 11 February 2024 – Sunday next before Lent

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant Jonathan Draper and preacher, Bill Pattinson

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's Church with celebrant and preacher, Ash Leighton Plom

4pm Thrive Ash Leighton Plom

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church led by Robert Mitchell

Message from the Churchwardens:

1. Funeral details for Hilary Elliott

Hilary's funeral will be at St David's on Wednesday, 28 February, at 1.00 pm (live-streamed via St David's church Facebook page), followed by a reception at the City Gate Hotel. The Requiem and Interment of her ashes will take place at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds, at a later date.

2. Magazine

Owing to sickness on the part of members of the team, there will now be a combined February/March edition of the magazine – deadline for copy, 18 February. Thanks for all your support.

3. Pre-Lent Brunch

Next Sunday, 11 February - pre-Lent brunch – can you contribute? There's a sign-up sheet at the back of church if you can.

Visiting and home Communion

If you would like to be visited or phoned by someone from the church community, please let Howard Friend know by ringing him on 07733 739453; for Communion at home, either for yourself or someone you know, please contact Ian Cartwright on 07813 795616.

Men's Breakfast – Saturday, 10 February

The next Men's breakfast will be next Saturday, 10 February at the Boston Tea Party. Please contact Alan Baker if you would like a reminder alan.baker1963@outlook.com

Parish Lunch – Thursday, 22 February 2024, 12 noon

Our next parish lunch will be on Thursday, 22 February and after that on Thursday, 21 March. A group will be walking over from St David's at 11.45.

Knit and Natter, Saturday 24 February 2024

The next Knit and Natter will be on 24 February at 10.30 at St David's.

Other dates for your diary

Friday, 8 March - parish Quiz Night

Saturday, 23 March – deep clean of St David's – much help needed

Sunday, 12 May – proposed date for Christian Aid Week brunch

Saturday, Saturday, 22 June – Parish fete – much help needed

New Leaves

Due to illness on the part of various team members, the next issue of the magazine will now be a combined issue for February and March. The deadline for copy for this issue is *Sunday, 18 February*. The editors are very grateful for the fantastic support of all contributors and readers.

Tuesday Friendship Café

St David's Church is open on Tuesday mornings from 10.30am to 12 noon as a drop-in for people to find a Christian welcome and company.

Thrive – Sundays @4 at St David's Church

As well as music and food, we are starting the Romans Course. Get intrigued, here: www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/the-romans-course

Wednesday Walks

Wednesday walkers have met all but two or three times during the past year and have enjoyed convivial conversation, gentle strolls, the changing of the seasons and a coffee together. Would you like to join us? We'd make you very welcome! Why not make Wednesday mornings with friends your new year's resolution? We meet at 9am at the door at the west end of St David's and we leave promptly. If you'd like to join us please just turn up, or speak to Helena in church.

Learn to cook with team @34, Exeter College

The team at Exeter College's @34 Restaurant says: 'We have just the thing to make your January blues a thing of the past! This year we have a host of exciting evening courses to offer you delivered right here in the @34 Restaurant at Exeter College with our expert chef lecturers. You've eaten our award winning food now go behind the scenes and enhance your cooking skills by choosing from our incredible short courses. To view our short courses or book online, follow [this link](#), or scroll down for more info'. Fees apply.

Your Prayers are asked for...

those who are suffering including:

Margaret Roberts, Emma White, Caroline Speed-Andrews; Maggs Bedford, Nan Biles, Delia Bloom, Caroline Darch and family, Lois Draper, Andrew Francis, Phoebe Goldsworth, Hazel Gowland, Eileen Jarman, Roger Luscombe, Anne Smith; Pam Smith, Grace Tointon, Bill Warner, Tony Whitear, Sarah Wood; Clive and Jeanie; Beth; Charlotte, Paul and Grace; Will.

those who have died recently including:

Paul Bentley (former curate); Hilary Elliot, John Randall

In our Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for:

YMCA and The Thirsty Group (monthly faith discussion)

Please also pray for:

Our parish as we seek a positive vision for the future

Our country and all those affected by the recent storms

Our world, for wisdom for its leaders and a wish for peace not war

Sunday, 4 February 2024, Collect and Readings for the 2nd Sunday before Lent

Collect

Almighty God,

you have created the heavens and the earth

and made us in your own image:

teach us to discern your hand in all your works

and your likeness in all your children;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,

now and for ever.

1st reading - Proverbs 8: 1, 22-31

Does not wisdom call,

and does not understanding raise her voice?

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,

the first of his acts of long ago.

Ages ago I was set up,

at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth,

when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped,

before the hills, I was brought forth—

when he had not yet made earth and fields,

or the world's first bits of soil.

When he established the heavens, I was there,

when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

when he made firm the skies above,

when he established the fountains of the deep,

when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

2nd reading - Colossians 1: 15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Gospel Reading - John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Sermon by Ian Cartwright for 4 February 2024

Have you been to the cinema in the past few months? No, I am not looking for confessions from anyone who went to see “Barbie”. Perhaps you have seen one of the other recent films such as “Oppenheimer”, “Napoleon” or “Maestro” about the life of Leonard Bernstein. The common theme of all these films is that they are about the life of one individual; one life per film. How strange then that the latest film we have seen is actually called “One Life”. If you have not seen it or heard about it - and there has been quite a bit of publicity about it - it concerns the work of Sir Nicholas Winton in bringing hundreds of children from Prague just before the outbreak of World War Two in what was called “The Kindertransport”. There are literally thousands of people living now who might not be doing so if these children had not been brought to safety. One life has saved many lives.

The concept of one life is fundamental to our understanding of the Gospels as they narrate the life of Jesus Christ. Our faith is rooted around these 4 books as they record the life of, as St John puts it in our Gospel Reading this morning, the Word who is Emmanuel (God With Us), the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The chosen Gospel Reading for this morning may have come as something of a surprise given that it is so associated with Christmas. However, it is so very full of deep meaning that it deserves to be considered again outside the context of Christmas as it commences the narrative of the ministry, teaching, parables and miracles of one life - the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Indeed, this so well-known passage is effectively an introduction, a foretaste, of what is to come in the rest of the Gospel. Its themes of light and darkness, of creation and re-creation, of rejection and acceptance are all amplified and developed in the following chapters of the Gospel.

Another significant theme is that of “life” as we read in verses 3 and 4:

“What has come into being in Him was life and the life was the light of all people”.

The significance of this theme of life is brought into focus as three of the seven “I am” sayings recorded in St John’s Gospel refer to “life”. They are:

“I am the Bread of Life”

“I am the Way, The Truth and the Life”

“I am the Resurrection and the Life”

So how is this theme of “life” developed by John?

We only have to wait until Chapter 3 to get a clue to what this life is like as we read one of the most well-known verses in the whole Bible, namely John chapter 3 and verse 16:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life”

Possibly, the most fundamental change in our liturgy in recent years is that all references to “bring you to eternal life” are now rendered as “keep you in eternal life”.

This change reflects the fact that a response of faith, a commitment, creates a relationship which can be described as “eternal life”; that is the life of the age to come experienced in the present. Eternal life is not just for the future, it is to be experienced here and now. Our death is not the start of eternal life; it is but a step along the road of eternal life.

We should look upon “eternal life” as being in communion with God through Jesus Christ giving an experience of paradise restored as it might have been originally intended by God before the Fall.

Another clue developing the theme of life is found in chapter 10 and verse 10 where we read Jesus saying:

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”

“They” in this context refers to the sheep (that is us!) for whom Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

The word used here to describe life, “abundantly”, is sometimes rendered as “in all its fullness” or “in all its richness” and is a translation of the Greek word for having a surplus, something extra in life, something on top of what we might expect, life plus plus. To use one of Jesus’s own analogies, it is like adding salt to improve the taste of what might otherwise be ordinary food. Abundant life adds an extra dimension to what is otherwise ordinary life.

When we try to live our own lives, life can be dull and dispiriting but we are offered a different style of life namely abundant life providing a new vitality and purpose as believers. Life in all its fullness is about having a varied life full of learning, growing, helping, reward, joy, excitement and caring. This is not to say that life will be without its problems and challenges but, with life in all its fullness, we can approach them in a more meaningful and positive way breathing in God's grace and love with the assurance of eternal life to sustain us.

Just a few verses later in Jesus's discourse about sheep we find these words:

"I lay down my life for the sheep"

and

"I lay down my life in order to take it up again"

In this way, John portrays what will be the climax of his Gospel; Jesus's death on the cross and His resurrection. We may say that something is a matter of life and death but John wants us to recognise that the story he has to tell is a matter of life and death - and life again. The story could have ended with the extinguishing of a life on a cross just outside Jerusalem in which case we would not be here now. Yes, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice in laying down His life but the truth is that, as He predicted, he would take His life up again. In his own words "I am the Resurrection and the Life".

Although John's gospel has 21 chapters, there is an apparent finality at the end of Chapter 20 where the final two verses tell us:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in His name.

So here it is, from beginning to end, St. John's Gospel is about having life. Abundant life, sacrificial life, resurrection life and eternal life.

Post-Communion Prayer

God our creator,
by your gift

the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly paradise,
and the bread of life at the heart of your Church:
may we who have been nourished at your table on earth
be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross
and enjoy the delights of eternity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

(NB: all readings can be found via Oremus Bible
Browser: <https://bible.oremus.org/> in the New Revised Standard Version
(anglicized edition))

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