

# Swaythling Parish

## Sunday 4 October 2020

### Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

#### Welcome

*Below is a service sheet for you to use for this week's Sunday morning service. You can also find our service each Sunday morning through the YouTube channel. It will be available on YouTube from 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it (viewable from any smartphone, tablet or computer, and also from most "smart" TVs). If do not have access to watch the YouTube video, we hope you will be able to use these words and join us too in spirit.*

#### Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, whether joining online, reading from the sheet, or worshipping in person.

We have been encouraged to know that this service continues to be valued by some of you and as such we are keen that it should continue, but will be doing so in a simplified form from next week.

#### Greeting

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

**And also with you.**

The Lord be with you

**And also with you**

#### Prayer of Thanks

We take a moment to recognise all that is good, in the midst of our lives.

Following on from this our first hymn is :

#### Hymn: Guide me O thou great redeemer

1. Guide me, O thou great redeemer,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty,  
Hold me with thy powerful hand;  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven  
Feed me till I want no more;  
Feed me till I want no more.
2. Open now the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through:  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer;  
Be thou still my strength and shield;  
Be thou still my strength and shield.
3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction  
Land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to thee;  
I will ever give to thee.

Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch  
William Williams, 1717-1791,  
translated Peter Williams, 1723-1796

#### Confession

We now take a moment to say sorry, a moment to recognise the time we have caused pain to

others, the times we have failed to act in humility and love, the moments we have let ourselves down, in the knowledge that we are held in God's forgiving love.

For the people we have hurt and those we have let down

Lord have mercy  
**Lord have mercy**

For times when bitterness and anger have been our watchword and not love

Christ have mercy  
**Christ have mercy**

For the times when we are beaten by inertia, and cynicism and fail to do what we can and should.

Lord have mercy  
**Lord have mercy**

May the God of love  
Bring us back to himself,  
Forgive us our sins,  
and assure us of his eternal love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### The Collect

Gracious God,  
you call us to fullness of life:  
deliver us from unbelief  
and banish our anxieties  
with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Readings:

### Philippians 3: 4b-14

*A message about priorities.*

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### Matthew 21: 33-end

*Another story following on from the one we heard last week, for the Pharisees, and us, to think about.*

'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'

Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

"The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord's doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes"?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard

his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### A Reflection from Ann Lewin

Today's readings are both in a way about life being in a period of change, being moved on to another stage. That seems to me to be where we are, as the pandemic which has dominated our lives for the last few months requires different responses from us if we are to suppress it. We are in uncharted territory, which is not a comfortable place to be.

Last February, I knew what I was doing most of the time. There were commitments in my diary, some routine, like meetings or visits to the dentist, others rather more attractive, like concerts, visits to the theatre, time with friends, outings to interesting places. Then suddenly all that structure to life was taken away. The rumour of an illness spreading rapidly in China became a reality around the world. Pandemic, a word that had never seemed of much relevance to us became part of our everyday speech, along with terms like lock-down, social distancing, shielding. Instructions to stay at home except for essential outings, particularly if we were over 70, put a boundary around our lives. Churches along with all public buildings were closed. My diary was suddenly emptied of all engagements. What would happen now?

In one way life didn't change. I live on my own, with a pattern of life inspired by the Benedictine Rule with its balance between work, rest, prayer, and recreation. I'm used to my own company, and I wasn't going to have to wonder what to do with myself- long overdue house de-cluttering would keep me out of mischief for a long time, and I haven't got to the end of it yet. And as for the pile of books waiting to be read, that would take some time to get through too.

But all the *outer* markers had gone – even shopping, which other people did for me, a blessing for which I was grateful, even though they provided me with some interesting challenges, when they didn't read my shopping list in quite the way I hoped they would. But I couldn't be out in the community, involved in corporate life as I would normally have been.

Round about the time lock-down began, I came across a poem, *Old maps no longer work*, by an American nun, Joyce Rupp. It's an inner conversation about the struggle between wanting things to be as they were, and realising that we need to take hold of the opportunity to discover a new future.

*I keep pulling it out -  
the old map of my inner path.  
I squint closely at it,  
trying to see some hidden road  
that maybe I've missed,  
but there's nothing there now  
except some well-travelled paths.  
They have seen my footsteps often,  
held my laughter, caught my tears.*

*I keep going over the old map*

*but now the roads lead nowhere,  
a meaningless wilderness  
where life is dull and futile.  
'Toss away the old map', she says  
'you must be kidding', I reply.  
She looks at me and repeats  
'toss it away,  
it's of no use where you are going.*

*'I have to have a map!' I cry,  
even if it takes me nowhere.  
I can't be without direction'.  
'But you are without direction', she says  
'so why not let it go, be free'.*

*So there I am, tossing away the old map,  
sadly, fearfully, putting it behind me.  
'Whatever will I do?' wails my security.  
'trust me', says my soul.*

*No map, no specific directions,  
no 'this way ahead', or 'take a left'.  
How will I know which way to go?  
How will I find my way? No map'.  
But then my soul whispers:  
'there was a time before maps  
when pilgrims travelled by the stars'.*

*It is time for the pilgrim in me  
to travel in the dark,  
to learn to read the stars  
that shine in my soul.  
I will walk deeper  
into the dark of my night.  
I will wait for the stars, trust their guidance  
and let their light be enough for me.'*

Life has been that kind of pilgrimage, living a day at a time, recognising that what used to be

normality will not return. Whatever lies ahead it will be new, not a new normal but a new pattern to explore. We will be making a new map, perhaps a series of new maps, as some routes we thought promising turn out to be dead ends. These last few months have been a time for the pilgrim in me to see what the guiding stars will tell me. I wonder what stars have emerged for each one of us. One star that emerged very early on for me was the star of Hope, a star of looking for positive ways to live offering a fundamentally important challenge to despair. Close to it was a star of Trust – the writers of the Psalms keep reminding us of God's faithfulness in dark times as well as when all goes well. These reminders are often very close to expressions of Lament, recognition that much has been lost, but claiming also that God has never let his people down. That star is close to one of Thanksgiving, which in turn leads to Joy. Joy doesn't mean being or feeling cheerful all the time, it wells up from growing confidence in God's faithfulness. These guiding stars are not all about personal well-being: there is the star of Compassion too, recognising the pain and suffering that people around us are experiencing, and encouraging us to bring help where we can. A star that I keep looking for, one that we all need, is the star of wisdom as we seek to find a new way of living which is ever closer to what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. Following these stars, meeting what comes trusting in God's faithfulness, seems to be to be the right way to go - but it isn't easy. Fear lurks around gnawing away at trust. We will probably all have times when the stars are blotted out and the sky is heavy with doubt. But the stars have only disappeared from our sight. By God's grace the stars continue to shine, doing their best to dispel

the clouds, reminding us that God will never let us down.

There is a prayer that has accompanied people of faith since at least the fourth century, used in times of plague, civil war, reformation of church practices, world wars, upheavals of many kinds, as well as when all has been going well. We can take with us as we journey on:

*Go before us O Lord in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in thee we may glorify thy holy name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.*

### Prayers

*In the video, Ruth leads us in prayers for our world and our community. We remember again here the prayer that Ann just mentioned:*

Go before us O Lord in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in thee we may glorify thy holy name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Merciful father, accept our prayers for the sake of your son our saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

### Prayer of thanks for Gifts

Let us have a moment to acknowledge again all that we have as individuals and as a church community, not what would be but what is. If you would like to give to the life and work of this church then you can send a cheque made payable

to Swaythling Parish, or give online :  
[www.give.net/SwaythlingParish](http://www.give.net/SwaythlingParish)

Let us take a moment now to give thanks to God: We thank you Lord for all the gifts we have received, financial and in so many other ways. Help us to use them wisely to share your love in this place. **Amen**

### Hymn: He who would valiant be

1 He who would valiant be  
'gainst all disaster,  
let him in constancy  
follow the Master.  
There's no discouragement  
shall make him once relent  
his first avowed intent  
to be a pilgrim.

2 Who so beset him round  
with dismal stories,  
do but themselves confound -  
his strength the more is.  
No foes shall stay his might,  
though he with giants fight;  
he will make good his right  
to be a pilgrim.

3 Since, Lord, Thou dost defend  
us with Thy Spirit,  
we know we at the end  
shall life inherit.  
Then, fancies, flee away!  
I'll fear not what men say,  
I'll labour night and day  
to be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

### A Closing Prayer

God of our pilgrimage,  
you have fed us with the bread of heaven.  
Refresh and sustain us  
as we go forward on our journey,  
to live and work to your praise and  
glory. **Amen**

### Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for joining us today. May we go out and live the lives we have been given and not the ones we may wish to be given.

May we go from this moment as radicals, as travellers, as change makers, as those who maintain the spaces of love, as people of prayer, sometimes as people called to be, sometimes as people called to do but always as people called to love. And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. **Amen.**

### APCM - Sunday 18 October at 10.15am

We will be holding our Annual Parochial Church Meeting as part of our morning worship on Sunday 18 October at St Alban's, at 10.15am. This was due to be held in March, but postponed due to lockdown. If you are not already on the electoral roll (which enables you to vote at the meeting), and would like to be added, forms can be found at the back of both churches, or we can email or post one out to you. We did a full revision of the roll last year, so if you filled in a form last year, then there is no need to fill it in again this year.

*Thank you for joining in with us. If we can support you in any way, please get in touch. peter.dockree@outlook.com 023 8055 4231 Songs reproduced under CCLI Licence No 159376. Streaming Licence No 101226. Scripture quotations from NRSVA version of the Bible, © 1989, 1995.*