

30th August 2020

**Notices**

* **Back in the building – the Circuit Leadership Team is proposing the following opportunities to ‘In-presence’ worship through September. Details about booking in will need to be resolved by the Church Stewards in each place. Preacher allocations will follow. We strongly encourage priority to be given to those people who are unable to access worship online.**

**Sunday 6th September: Great Barford, Ramsey, Huntingdon**

**Sunday 13th September: Berkley Street, Brampton, Buckden**

**Sunday 27th September: Alconbury**

* **Various online opportunities via Facebook, YouTube and Zoom (**10.30am)**.** Zoom login with the following details. (Please do not share these details via social media)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82767532960?pwd=Z05UTnc0NjZ3TVhuOEJxMW01ZXMzZz09>

Meeting ID: 827 6753 2960

Password: 666326

You can also join the zoom service by telephone using any of the following numbers:

0131 460 1196; 0203 051 2874; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240

* **Connecting via the telephone:** 01480 200195 (Regular reflections from Nick) and 01480 597118 (listen to a devotional message by one of our Local Preachers or James anytime during the week).

**Dear Friends,**

A reflection on Matthew 16 v21-28

*A couple were arranging their wedding and asked the bakery to inscribe the wedding cake with 1 John 4:18 which reads “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear”.*

*The bakery evidently lost, smudged or otherwise misread the noted reference, and beautifully inscribed on the cake John 4:18 ... “For you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” smudged or*

We all get it wrong sometimes and in this case it is Peter. As soon as Jesus began speaking about his death, Peter took him to one side and began to rebuke him…never Lord…this shall never happen to you. Peter cannot see how Jesus who is God has to die….and on the surface that seems pretty logical. After all Gods are immortal, who had ever heard of a God who dies?

But you see Peter has fallen into an all too familiar trap, one which we too find it difficult to avoid. First of all to be a follower of Jesus we have to deny ourselves and take up our cross……and that means:

1. Not placing our expectations on God

Peter has a set idea about how the Christ is going to achieve salvation and that does not involve dying! V23 Jesus rebukes him....you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men. We must guard ourselves against the same mistake...that our own ideas and wants get in the way and become a stumbling block to the will of God.....our set ideas of church, our own personal stubbornness, selfishness and ambition....even our mission.

1. Being completely open to the will of God

Being open to the will of God means that our goal at all times, in all circumstances and at any cost we become the means by which God is able to do his work and fulfil his purpose, irrespective of the personal implication to ourselves.

1. Following in the footsteps of Jesus

Taking up your cross is the positive action of following Jesus in total obedience...there are no half measures.....obedience to the Father led Jesus to the cross....taking up our cross and following is not a commitment of convenience, it is not a furthering of self-interest. It is an active doing...following...and abandonment of our own plans, resources and walking the path of Jesus wherever that may take us.

1. Being led by Jesus

Following means giving up control and being led by Jesus. When we want to be in control, we become a stumbling block – it is like saying to Jesus, now you follow me!! Giving up control is at the heart of the call of v25 – whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. Giving up everything and handing over all of our life and its gains is what is demanded. There is a famous quote from Jim Elliot which sums this all up: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”.

SO WHAT IS IT GOING TO BE?......HOW ARE YOU GOING TO RESPOND?

Imagine the call to follow Jesus is like a great bell which rings down the centuries like a great bell in a distant church, calling us from whatever we are doing. Imagine the bell echoing through the streets: pick up your cross and follow me…..pick up your cross and follow me. Imagine its sound resonating through shops, offices, through schools, houses and blocks of flats...pick up your cross and follow me. Imagine people coming out of their doors to see where the noise is coming from, to listen to this great bell and there walking ahead of them, is Jesus a compelling and mysterious figure...pick up your cross and follow me.

Listen for the bell, listen for his call...for he is calling you today...deny self, take up your cross and follow.

With love and prayers,

***Nick***

**Entering God’s presence**

Lord, I draw near with faith. Open my eyes to see and ears to hear what you have for me, today and every day. Amen

**Hymn: Hymn: StF 608 All Praise to Our Redeeming Lord**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhE-MoyghuI>

All praise to our redeeming Lord,

who joins us by his grace,

and bids us, each to each restored,

together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;

and, gathered into one,

to our high calling's glorious hope

we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,

we all delight to prove;

the grace through every vessel flows,

in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,

and cordially agree;

concentred all, through Jesu's name,

in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,

the common peace we feel,

a peace to sensual minds unknown,

a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below

in Jesus be so sweet,

what heights of rapture shall we know

when round his throne we meet!

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

**Prayer** (from The Vine)

Gracious God, we are your people, seeking to know you more. Gracious God, come amongst us, by your Spirit, that we might be transformed by our encounter with you. Gracious God, may we go from this place, recognising you in every place and every moment. Amen.

**God’s word:** Read one or more of these passages and allow time and space for God to speak though his word: [**Exodus 3: 1-15**](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=369094257)**,** [**Psalm 105: 1-6, 23-26, 45c**](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=369094282)**,** [**Romans 12: 9-21**](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=270017605)**,** [**Matthew 16: 21-28**](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=270017643)**.**

**Time to reflect with Matthew 16:21-28**

1. Our culture seems to claim that those who want to save their lives can do so, mostly by possessing more things and living in ever greater comfort. Jesus pulls no punches; he challenges us to be ready to lose our lives to be able to save them. I ask myself what this means in my life, here and now, whether I feel called to let go of something precious to me to be able to live more fully.
2. If we are to be followers of Jesus, we need to let him lead, accepting that he will not lead us away from suffering, pain or difficulty. Instead of seeking our own benefit and gain, we allow every experience – even in moments of distress – to draw us into closer relationship with Jesus who invites us to lay our burdens on his shoulders. I pray that I may let go and grow in trust of God’s love for me.

**Read the story and think: AN INVITATION**

‘You are not, under any circumstances whatsoever, to set foot inside Mrs Cunningham’s garden’ had been a clear instruction Harry could remember for as long as he could remember anything at all. In later childhood years, when he was able to understand instructions a little better, the rule was expanded into ‘Even if your football is to go over the fence, you’re not to go looking for it, OK?’ and ‘If I catch you even thinking about going into Mrs Cunningham’s garden, you’re for the high jump, understand?’ And, of course, Harry did understand, especially when his dad’s instructions had put the fear of death into him – for as long as he could remember anything at all.

When Harry was old enough he actually plucked up enough courage to ask his dad ‘Why?’ After all, as far as he knew, Mrs Cunningham was quite a nice lady, and there were no funny stories about her that Harry had heard. Harry’s dad was surprisingly forthcoming.

‘Dahlias….’ He said with a grunt.

‘Dahlias?’ Harry replied, as politely as he could, never having heard the word before and hoping it wasn’t rude.

‘Dahlias,’ his dad responded,’ dahlias, prize dahlias. Don’t you have eyes? Those big flowers that she guards as if they were gold dust. And if you set foot in yon garden, even before they start to bloom, she goes mental. MENTAL, so she does. It’s the dahlias. She’s got dahlias on the brain, so she has. No one’s to go near Mrs Cunningham’s dahlias – ever. As far as Mrs Cunningham’s concerned, her garden and her dahlias are holy ground. OK?’

Of course it was OK, ‘cause Harry’s dad knew best. And Harry had kept his eyes open. Well, Mrs Cunningham’s garden was hard to miss. It was a blaze of colour all through the summer, and even when there were no plants growing, Mrs Cunningham was out there in all weathers, pruning this and digging that, turning over mulch and clearing weeds, watering beds and tidying edges. ‘So these big, round, colourful flowers must be the dahlias, then,’ thought Harry, and made very sure, every day, that his ball didn’t stray over the fence.

One Saturday Harry was sitting on his front step reading a comic when he heard a voice. ‘Harry,’ it said. Harry ignored it, figuring it must be from the TV in the living room and returned to his comic. ‘Harry, young Harry,’ the voice persisted, and Harry realised it was coming from outside the house and not from the inside. He looked up from his comic, listened for a bit, heard no more, and got on with his reading. ‘Harry! Coo-eee! Harry, over here.’ This time, the voice couldn’t be ignored.

So, laying his comic on the step beside him, Harry stood up and took a tentative step in the direction he thought the voice was coming from – the fence between his garden and Mrs Cunningham’s. He was peering and wondering …… when he was almost scared out of his wits by the large figure of Mrs Cunningham, complete with green overalls and wearing a fetching straw hat, jumping up from behind her border-display of vibrant blooms. Seeing Harry’s surprise and obvious discomfort, Mrs Cunningham let out a roar of laughter such as Harry had never heard before. ‘Ah ha! Gotcha! You never expected that, eh?’ she guffawed. She was right! Harry hadn’t expected that at all! But he didn’t know how to say so. All he knew was that Mrs Cunningham was talking ….. from her garden….behind her prize dahlias …..

When Mrs Cunningham’s laughter had subsided to a gentle chuckle, she leant on her rake and smiled at Harry. ‘Hello, young man. Nothing to do? Well, I need an extra pair of hands with my dahlias today. D’you want to come over?’ she offered. Harry couldn’t believe his ears – or his eyes, for that matter. Here was Mrs Cunningham…. From behind her prize dahlias …. Asking him over.

‘But my dad ….’ Harry stammered.

‘Uh huh?’ encouraged Mrs Cunningham.

‘He says I’ve not …..’ he stuttered.

‘What?’ the gardener asked.

‘Not to …. Dahlias …’ was all that Harry could get out. Mrs Cunningham smiled.

‘Oh, I know that,’ she said reassuringly. ‘And I would chase you if you set foot in here uninvited.’ Harry nodded, not knowing what else to do. ‘But I’ve had a word with your dad and it’s OK if I invite you, because I’ll know what you’re up to, for you’ll be with me all the time, never out of my sight, young man.’ Harry nodded some more. ‘So, what’s it to be? Want to come over?’ Another speechless nod from Harry, Mrs Cunningham smiled again. ‘Well then, come round to the back gate. Wait there and I’ll let you in. Just for a while, mind, because I don’t want your family to think you’ve got lost. Come on then, quick as you like….’

Harry spent half an hour with Mrs Cunningham and her dahlias. He’d thought they were pretty good and bright enough when he could see them from across the fence. But up close …. Wow! And he learned how the dahlia had been named after a Swedish botanist and whey they were called ‘Georgia’ in Germany; he was asked to repeat names such as ‘Davenport Sunrise’ and ‘Aurora’s Kiss’; he heard about lily and cactus varieties. And all the time Mrs Cunningham made Harry feel very special indeed.

When Harry’s dad came home later in the afternoon, Harry was back sitting on the front step reading his comic. ‘You’re looking pretty pleased with yourself,’ his dad remarked. ‘ Good comic, then?’

‘Oh it’s OK,’ Harry replied.

‘So why the grin, then, eh?’ his dad persisted.

‘No reason,’ Harry replied. But as his dad shrugged and slipped past him into the hallway, Harry added in a voice barely above a whisper, ‘apart from the fact that today I’ve been standing on holy ground.’

**Holy Ground**

If Moses stood before a bush that never burned away,

And knew he was on holier ground than any other day,

And heard a voice that called for him to be what he could be…

I wonder – what is holy ground for me?

Perhaps it’s when I go to church and holy thoughts ascend;

Or maybe in the presence of a very special friend;

Or taking in a sunset far across a glassy sea…

Pray tell me – where is holy ground for me?

And when I’m lost in music and, my mind’s on higher things;

Or when I read of saints of old, and know my spirit sings;

Where peace has been established, and harmony’s the key…

I ask you- is this holy ground for me?

It is! And when you doubt yourself and wonder what is going on,

Just live within the moment, and know new truth will dawn.

This wonder, peace and beauty are the gifts I guarantee.

You’re standing here, on holy ground, for me!

**Prayers of intercession**

Gracious God, we bring before you our prayers for the world

We pray for all those who lack physical things, food, shelter, water, and all of life’s necessities.

We pray for those who mourn, and those who ail. Lord, for those we may help, may our hands work quickly, and for those we personally cannot help, we pray for the hands that will.

We pray for all those who work to provide care and help to others. Lord bless them and keep them from tiredness and error, and those they care for, keep them from despair. We bring the names of those known to us before you…

We pray for all in spiritual distress, who struggle to hear your message, or to come to you in prayer. Lord, help them to heed.

We pray for ourselves. Strengthen us to come through this time renewed in faith in certainty. Help us to hear your call that we might pick up our cross and follow you. Encourage and embolden us.

We pray for our land and nation. Lord, help us all to endure, to do our duty and to serve you faithfully. May our land be brightened by the Light of Lord as we leave these times behind.

Lord, we ask these things, knowing that when we pray, wherever we pray, you hear our prayers. Thanks be unto you, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

**Listen & Sing:**

Once again by Matt Redman <https://youtu.be/FkK4YHy-wNg>

Father hear the prayer we offer <https://youtu.be/CFoactKMJHQ>

To God be the glory <https://youtu.be/6xPAF0YlY5A?list=RD6xPAF0YlY5A>

Lord You have My Heart – Delirious <https://youtu.be/lIRPDwwO8mw>

**Family worship for Sunday** (for family worship: [**www.rootsontheweb.com/familiesathome**](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/familiesathome)**30aug**)

**Blessing:**

Lord, as we go forth, may we see all the things you long for us to notice. May we be your people in all we do and say. Amen.

‘The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.’ Philippians 4: 5 – 6