

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

27th February 2022: Sunday before Lent

Hazel writes:

The news this week will have made every one of you turn to prayer in some form or another, as the Archbishops of Canterbury and York recognised in a letter to all members of the Church of England, which you can read here:

www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/pastoral-letter-archbishops-canterbury-and-york. We will be praying for peace in Ukraine at our services on Sunday, and there will also be opportunities to pray with others during next week at Morning Prayer, our Ash Wednesday services and in connection with The World Day of Prayer which is on Friday.

Today, we have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church, 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – Jesus shall take the highest honour – Christ whose glory fills the skies – Lord, the light of your love is shining -Let us break bread together – Longing for light (Christ be our light)

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis – Jesus shall take the highest honour – Be still, for the presence of the Lord – Christ whose glory fills the skies – Meekness and Majesty

St. Mary's augmented choir present a **concert including Three Wise Camels** by Roger Jones at **3.30 p.m.** today – Sunday 27th February - followed by tea in the hall. Tickets at £7 will be available at the door if you haven't already purchased one.

A **women's event** will be on Tuesday 1st March, when we will be sharing pancakes at St Francis' Church from 8pm. If you would like, bring your own favourite toppings and a friend to share the pancakes with.

This week **Ash Wednesday** is on Wednesday 2nd March and there will be Holy Communion services for all the churches in West Wickham held in St Francis at 10.45am and in Hawes Lane Methodist Church at 8pm. Both these services will include the imposition of ashes.

Our **Lent groups** begin their meetings after Wednesday and Brian's sermon today is an introduction to them: how we can use The Beatitudes to live a good life as a child of God's kingdom, just as Jesus did. If you are not at one of the services, do read the sermon and my article in the magazines on the Lent groups. If you would like to join

one of these groups, but have not already arranged it, do be in touch with one of the leaders, or you can sign up on a sheet in church:

- Monday evenings – contact Richard on 020 8289 2432 or richard.ford73@ntlworld.com
- Wednesday evenings – contact Nicky on 020 8916 9855 or nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk
- Thursday mornings – contact Debbie on 020 8777 7834 or debadams64@icloud.com
- Friday mornings – contact Ken on 020 8777 1850 or kennethabryan@aol.com

You can swap from one group to another so that you don't miss a week.

Coffee & Chat is this week on Thursday 3rd at 2.30pm on Zoom and on the third Thursday in person at St Francis' Church. If you would like to come and meet others for a chat, please do join us. If you would like to do this, but cannot make the date, or would like the log-in details, please let Rowena know (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com or 8777 6112).

The **World Day of Prayer** is on Friday 4th March when Churches Together in West Wickham have a service at 10.30am in Hawes Lane Methodist Church.

Next **Sunday 6th March**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church and at 10am in St. Mary's Church, which will be a joint service with a focus on our telephone befriending work.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our service will be livestreamed on YouTube from St Mary's at **9.15am** on Sunday. All other files for this week have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – St. Illtud's Radical hospitality.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Bath Abbey.
 - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m.- Katherine Jenkins visits St. David's College, where higher education began in Wales.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned hot and cold meat, tinned potatoes, tinned vegetables, long life fruit juice, tinned fish, chopped tomatoes, rice, custard, rice pudding. They are well stocked with pasta, cereals and baked beans. Please do not bring any fresh food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

We are now approaching the time of our annual meetings when new **PCC members** will be elected. If you are interested in what happens in our churches, please do think about joining the PCC. Speak to Hazel or any member currently on the PCC for more information.

Eco Church is a tool to help us in treasuring God's earth. It's an online survey which looks at:

- worship and teaching
- management of church buildings
- management of church land
- community and global engagement
- lifestyle. You can see the detail of questions asked here:

<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Eco-Church-Survey-v2-January-2018.pdf>. If there are any things that you would be interested in looking at in more detail, please contact Nicky Nightingale at nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or on 8916 9855.

Easter Eggs that share the Easter Story – Chocolate Evangelism! If you buy Easter Eggs for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, etc, think about buying them from the Meaningful Chocolate Company. Each egg comes with a 24-page Easter story-activity book, the chocolate is Fair Trade, and a percentage of the profits will be donated to charity. In the past 11 years, more than 3 million people have read the Easter story books and £320,000 plus has been raised for good causes. You can't buy these eggs in supermarkets, but I would be delighted to order as many eggs as you would like. There are further details and an order form at the back of the church.

Prices: Dark chocolate - £5.50; Milk chocolate - £4.50; White chocolate - £5.00

To get free delivery, I need your orders by March 13th at the latest. If you're not able to place your order at church, contact me at richard.ford73@ntlworld.com or on 020 8289 2432. I'll collect the money from you when the eggs have arrived. *Richard Ford*

Police Encounter Panels South Area Police are looking for members of the public to form a panel on each of the three boroughs – Sutton, Bromley and Croydon. The panels are being created to give communities the opportunity to feedback on policing encounters from their own neighbourhoods, by watching Body Worn video (BWV) footage and offering their views on what went well or what the Met can improve. If you are over 18 and live, work, in education or have other strong links to the boroughs and would like to get involved or simply hear more, please email the dedicated mailbox at PolicingEncounters.SouthArea@met.police.uk

Part time job opportunity: Looking for a friendly and trustworthy person to carry out herbicide treatment and occasional garden tidy ups for a local business: Longfield Knotweed Solutions. This is for one day a week (with potential for more days – can be flexible with hours to suit). Will be required to drive a small van, talk face to face with customers and input data onto mobile app. No prior experience necessary but enjoying outside work is important. For an informal chat please contact Charlotte Faint 0784 000211.

Carole Hubbard's funeral is at St. Mary's on Wednesday 9th March at 10.30 a.m. followed by a short service at Beckenham Crematorium. This will be followed by a buffet lunch at 1.00 p.m. at the Bromley Court Hotel. If you intend going to the Bromley Court Hotel, would you please let the family know beforehand at malcolmhubbard04@gmail.com. There will be family flowers only and donations will be either for Motor Neurone Disease Association or St. Christopher's Hospice.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

If anyone would like to join a group going to Made in Dagenham which the WWOS are performing at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley on Tuesday May 17th, please let Beryl know (8289 8097). If we get a group of 10 or more the cost of the ticket will be £22, less than that it will be £24.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Colossians 3: 12-17

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude

in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 5: 1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Post Communion Prayer

Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ: may we who are partakers at his table reflect his life in word and deed, that all the world may know his power to change and save. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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REFLECTION – Brian Griffiths

I hope you don't mind me sitting down to preach this morning, but it is actually quite biblical. I want us to think about The Beatitudes that we heard read in our gospel this morning and we read that Jesus went up the mountain and sat down to teach his disciples.

The Beatitudes are just that – 'Be Attitudes' – the attitudes we adopt if we want to 'Be Jesus' to others. I have been reflecting on those who have been Jesus to Rowena and myself during the last few months when I have been ill and had to undergo life changing surgery. We have both been eternally grateful to everyone who has prayed for us, sent kind emails, made supportive phone calls, given us lifts to hospital appointments, sent cards with prayers and good wishes, and even cooked and baked for us. The home-made soups and pies have been delicious! They were all like Jesus to us.

I have been amazed at the kindness shown by the surgeons, doctors and nurses in the hospitals. They may not have known that they were being Jesus to me, but they certainly were. A nurse noticed one of the chaplains at St George's Hospital giving me communion on the ward. She remarked how nice it was and then said, 'Mind you, I'll never make it to heaven – there's no chance for me'. I replied that I thought that no one was ruled out and no one was ruled in and remarked how kind she had been to me (even when she was sticking needles in me!) I don't think she took me seriously and we ended the conversation there while she did my observations and gave me my medication. Well, you can't really talk to anyone while you have a thermometer in your mouth. What she didn't realise was that she was being Jesus to me – indeed everyone who cared for me was like Jesus.

So, what's the secret? How do we be 'like Jesus' to one another and to our local community? Actually, it's no secret – we become like Jesus when we live the Kingdom values in The Beatitudes – and, in doing so, we counter the values of the world.

As we heard in our gospel reading from Matthew, each 'Be Attitude' begins with a blessing. What is a blessing? Traditionally it was believed that the rich, the fortunate, the elite, were the blessed ones – they had been given wealth, power, and worldly success. Jesus, however, blesses all who come to him, all those who have given up hope in this world, and he offers a new hope through faith in him, extending the invitation to share in the heavenly kingdom to the very least of us all.

The Sermon on the Mount is about as radical as it gets. It is a challenge to everyone who hears it not to go along with the world's understanding of success, but to look beyond, into the eternal. It gives a counter-narrative, an invitation to follow a new and different path. An invitation to 'think out of the box'. Often, it is only by thinking from a different perspective that a problem or challenge can be solved. We are encouraged to think from Jesus' perspective.

Jesus' kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. If you want to see where God is active with his blessings, look at the bottom of the heap, to the people who are forgotten and have no hope. It's the poor and the needy that are blessed, not the rich and powerful. Those who are virtuous, and who suffer for the sake of righteousness and Jesus, will also be rewarded. Jesus' words can renew our hope when we are at our lowest point.

During my recovery, I have been watching a lot (and I mean a lot!) of television – normally it works like this – first off is 'Bargain Hunt', followed by The News, 'Dickinson's Real Deal', 'Escape to The Country', 'Antiques Road Trip', 'Flog It', The News again and then whatever football match is on that evening. However, I noticed one day that the film 'Bruce Almighty' was on. I've seen this before and it's a good laugh – but on seeing it a second time I realised just how profound the film is – it said a lot to me about prayer and how someone changes due to acts of kindness.

Without giving too much away, Bruce Nolan (played by Jim Carrey) is a discontented news anchor man. After a particularly bad day Bruce rants at God. God (played by Morgan Freeman) and disguised as a janitor meets Bruce who eventually realises who he's talking to. God decides to give Bruce his powers, but he mustn't tell anyone that he is God, and he mustn't interfere with free will. God leaves the room up a stepladder and Bruce shouts after him:

Bruce: What if I need you? What if I have questions?

God: That's your problem, Bruce. That's everybody's problem. You keep looking up.

For me that is quite telling – "You keep looking Up". If we want to see God, we need to look around to see those in need around us. God is found in the most unexpected people and situations. Our God is a God of surprises – we should expect to be surprised by his presence each day – surprised by opportunities to be Jesus to those we meet.

So, Bruce has God's powers and in one scene he's in a diner and wants to see if he can part his soup in the bowl just like Moses parted the Red Sea. When he holds his hands

over the bowl his soup does indeed part which impresses Bruce no end. God pops up over his shoulder and again says something profound and challenging:

Parting a soup is not a miracle, Bruce. It's a magic trick. Now, a single mum who works two full-time jobs, and still finds the time to pick up her kid at soccer practice, that's a miracle. A teenager that says "no" to drugs and "yes" to an education, that's a miracle. People want me to do everything for them. What they don't realize is that they have the power. You want to see a miracle, son? Be the miracle.

‘Be the miracle’ is a line that runs right through the film, and it really made me think. We can be the miracle if we adopt the Be Attitudes.

The Be Attitudes are a way of experiencing God’s presence with us in our daily living. This is not about some deeper inner state: these are lifestyle choices. Yet, neither the people to whom they were first addressed, nor we today, would see them as natural aspirations. Jesus is challenging the society of his day. His teaching turns our normal aspirations on their head. Jesus is challenging us to be counter-cultural – he’s daring us to be different and he’s daring us to ‘be the miracle’ of bringing his kingdom into our church, into our families and into our community. How different do we dare to be? Can we ‘Be the Miracle?’

There’s a sequel to ‘Bruce Almighty’ – it’s called ‘Evan Almighty’. God (played by Morgan Freeman again!) tells a contented middle-class bloke called Evan Baxter to build an Ark (think Noah!). There’s a really thought-provoking conversation between God and Evan’s wife, Joan, which goes like this:

Let me ask you something. If one prays for patience, do you think God gives them patience? Or does he give them the opportunity to be patient? If they pray for courage, does God give them courage, or does he give them opportunities to be courageous? If one prayed for their family to be closer, you think God zaps them with warm, fuzzy feelings? Or does he give them opportunities to love each other?

Living the ‘Be Attitudes’ means looking out for opportunities to be kind, to be merciful, to get alongside those who mourn, to work with the poor, to be peacemakers and to begin to forgive. These opportunities are all around us – if only we would look around instead of looking up. We can be the miracle – we can change the world - we can transform our relationships. Being Jesus to others means abandoning our meagre resources and depending solely on God’s grace. This enables us to shift our focus to

promoting the values of God's kingdom: mercy, purity, peace, righteousness, and a commitment to God despite everything.

I want to end with a very modern 'down to earth' version of the Be Attitudes which illustrates how we can be like Jesus to others. Here it is:

*Happy are those who don't think they are the **bee's** knees,
God will give them honour in his kingdom.*

*Happy are those who are **beside** themselves with sorrow,
God will help them **begin** again.*

*Happy are those left **behind** in the race of life,
God will give them **beyond** measure.*

*Happy are those who **believe** that justice cries out to be done,
God will see their dreams fulfilled.*

*Happy are those who **behave** mercifully,
God will be generous to them in return.*

*Happy are those who **begin** to forgive,
God will show them his love.*

*Happy are those who bring peace **between** foes,
God will adopt them as his children.*

*Happy are those who are ill-treated **because** of loving Jesus,
God will give them a place in heaven.*

*Happy are those who are insulted **beyond** what they can bear,
God will astound them with the **beauty** of his love.*

Prayer Pointers

Pray that we may live the Be Attitudes looking for opportunities to be Jesus to one another and to our community. Pray that we may be the miracle for our friends, our relatives, our churches and our community.

Give thanks for the many people who are simply good people, who see the best in all situations, think the best of everyone and who are true to themselves.

Pray for all who struggle to obtain justice for the underprivileged and the oppressed, who challenge the status quo and work for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Pray for all who work for peace, not just an end to war and disharmony, but for those who can see both sides of the argument and who strive to create peace with justice, often doing so in situations of extreme personal danger.

Pray for those who are poor, for those whose poverty consumes their being, so that they are denied the ability to move, think, speak of anything but their hunger and thirst.

Pray for all those who are victimized for their beliefs, whatever their faith, for those who languish in prison, or who are denied education or employment, for those who are estranged from family and friends because of the choices they have made to hold fast to their faith

For all those who are ill and for their friends and relatives – especially for Vicky Pearce. For all recovering and convalescing from treatment - that they may have patience and be ready to accept help from others as they heal.

For the soul of Carol Hubbard, and her husband Malcolm and all her family and for the soul of Robert Davis, for his wife Marian and all his family as they mourn them and look to the future. May God help them to begin again.

A Prayer for Ukraine

God of strength and peace,
send your blessing on the people of Ukraine.
Sustain them in their struggles,
hold them in their fear,
protect them from all danger,
and be for them the hope they desire.

(Composed by Andrew Nunn – Dean of Southwark)