



Holy Trinity



St.
Gabriel

The Parish of The Good Shepherd, Ashton-under-Lyne



St. James



St. Peter



St. Michael and All Angels

AUGUST 2020

Price 50p

Editorial

'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.' (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The 60s hit *'Turn! Turn! Turn!'* by the Byrds is based on verses in this chapter: *'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.'* The different seasons of life are not random, for God is in control and His timing is perfect: *'He has made everything beautiful in its time.'*

The verse goes on to say that God *'has also set eternity in the human heart.'* This means that we all have an in-built sense that there's more to life than what we can see, as we search for meaning in life. However, we can fill our lives with other things: career, pleasure, shopping and relationships. While good in themselves, these things can never ultimately satisfy. It is only a relationship with God through Jesus that truly satisfies. How does this challenge us?

Firstly, we are to live for God in all that we do, knowing that it all counts for eternity. This includes helping others find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for eternity.

Secondly, we accept that there is lots in the current *'season'* where it's difficult to know what God is doing: *'no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.'* However, we do know that everything has consequences for eternity.

Finally, how can we be more aware of eternity every day? Spending time with God in worship and prayer will bring us the true pleasure that belongs to eternity.

'You made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.' (St Augustine).

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The views expressed in articles in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Parish of The Good Shepherd. The editor reserves the right to amend articles as appropriate, for editorial purposes. Please consider writing something for the magazine yourself! And, if you have any comments to make on the Magazine you can contact the editor, Roger Farnworth on 0161 330 2771 or talk to a member of your DCC or PCC who will pass on any comments that are made.

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The Parish Prayer

Father God, whose Son came to bring love and peace to the world, help us to grow in faith and share our hope and joy with all whom we meet, so that we can work together to build your kingdom in Ashton, welcome new people into our churches, and be relevant to those around us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Coronavirus Pandemic Church Openings for Morning and Evening Prayer



Our churches are now open for public worship!

This means that a person or household may enter our churches and be led in prayer or communal act.

Initially, 4 of our churches will be opening for Morning Prayer only, on Sunday mornings, and one for Evening Prayer each Thursday - there will not be Holy Communion just yet.

Risk assessments have been carried out and we have put procedures in place to ensure that people follow all relevant public health advice, including social distancing guidelines and hand and respiratory hygiene measures – you may find that your churches look a bit different as a result.

Please note that those who are extremely clinically vulnerable/shielding, or who have symptoms of a continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste, should not attend church.

Church Services

St. Gabriel's	9.30am Sundays	- Morning Prayer
St James'	9.30am Sundays	- Morning Prayer
St. Michael's	11.00am Sundays	- Morning Prayer
St. Peter's	11.00am Sundays	- Morning Prayer
Holy Trinity	4.00pm Thursdays	- Evening Prayer

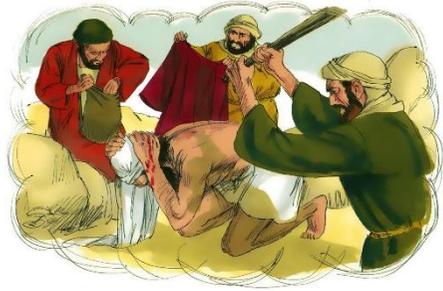
'Who is my neighbour?'

In our Sunday service we are working through some of the parables in the Gospel of Matthew. This is one from Luke's Gospel. I wonder who it was who first called Jesus' parable in Luke 10:25-37 'The Parable of the Good Samaritan'? It isn't there in the original Greek New Testament. Jesus tells the story in response to a question from a lawyer: 'Who is my neighbour?'

It strikes me that we need to focus on the question Jesus was asked if we are to understand the story as he intended it to be heard: 'Who is my neighbour?'

Who is my neighbour? Here in multi-cultural Ashton-under-Lyne, who is my neighbour? How might the parable have gone if Jesus had been telling it in Manchester - perhaps in Oldham or Tameside or more particularly here in Ashton-under-Lyne?

In the early years of this century we heard a lot about perceived 'no-go' areas in Glodick and elsewhere. We've even heard of white people walking round the outskirts of an area, so as to avoid crossing 'Asian' territory. Election results showed a startling support for the BNP even here in Tameside. In the early years of the last decade, we saw two marches in Ashton, one by the EDL (English Defence League) and one by



the NWI (North West Infidels), two organisations with narrow definitions of what it is to be British; two organisations that promote division and hatred.

If Jesus spoke in the white communities of central Oldham or to members of the EDL, who might this 'neighbour' have been? Perhaps a knife carrying Asian youth. Or if Jesus spoke in the midst of the Asian community, the 'neighbour' may well have been a somewhat over-weight skinhead with union-jack tattoos who belonged to the EDL. In Jewish culture the words 'Good' and 'Samaritan' just did not belong together. And in some of our communities it is nigh impossible for people in one area to think well of those in another. So: 'Who is my neighbour?'

Jesus challenges prejudice and hatred by making the perceived enemy, the saviour in the story. How would the story translate in Ashton-under-Lyne? If Jesus were to tell a story about one of the people living on Cow Hill Lane or Dean Street being mugged, who would the other main characters be?

The priest ...? Me or Ben? The Levite ...? Perhaps the closest would be a churchwarden or treasurer or church council secretary.

Starkly, in our version of the story, we, 'the religious ones', are seen to take one look, and because of our own fears we walk by, get into our cars and drive quickly out of the area. Perhaps a quick call to the police on our mobile phones! We allow wrong to go unchallenged.

And, who, in our context, might the 'neighbour' be?

Well over 10 years ago now, St. James' Church was very close to being burnt down. Someone set a bin fire against the wall of the vestry. Who was it that dealt with the problem? Not a church warden, not the Vicar. No, it was Kemsit, a local Asian Muslim young man who with his bare hands dragged the bin away from the vestry wall. And you know what he said to me. 'Someone is trying to burn down my church!'

Even if we think there is little of overt racism as we look around us in our neighbourhoods, or as we look at each other, actually we all need to acknowledge our own personal prejudices. Without being so very careful, we easily think in terms of them and us, so easily we harbour negative thoughts about those we perceive as different from us. We do make comparisons, don't we, and so

often when we make those comparisons, we compare our best with the other person's worst.

How do you think the story of the 'neighbour' might go if it were retold in Ashton? ... How would you imagine the story playing out?

If we were to set aside those questions of ethnic difference, perhaps there is one other place where the challenge for me or you might lie. It may well be a personal one.

Imagine the person you find most difficult; the person that you struggle with in Church, or in your community. Imagine them as the 'neighbour', the Good Samaritan, as the one who saves you, as the one who comes to your aid in a crisis. ... How would it feel? Embarrassing ...? Shaming ...? To be helped by someone against whom you harbour a grudge, someone you strongly dislike? What might God be asking of you if this were to occur?

Jesus is calling us to neighbourly conduct, to crossing perceived boundaries to help others in need, to be Good Samaritans. But he also wants to challenge us, to call into question our prejudices and assumptions. Just as the actions of the Samaritan would have shocked conscientious Jews - so Jesus wants to shock us - to help us to see the good in those we so easily despise.

Communication

Without it, where would we be?

Words spoken or written, sign language, guide dogs, smoke signals, morse code, flags, shorthand writing, TV, newspapers, phones and of course demonstrating our feelings for someone.

And so it is with praying – or just talking to God.

No, we can't do everything but there are some things we can do, including praying. Some people will say "but I don't know how, I don't know what to say".

Well, our prayer needs are many, for ourselves and others. So just say what is in your heart and minds, just a few words – God understands. He's always ready to listen – even silent prayer God understands. Pick and mix whatever feels right for you, or just say the Lord's Prayer. Even "God Bless Us All, Amen" will suffice.

As for myself, I pray each day, often. I pray before I get out of bed and before I go out.

Prayer time really is important, but never forget to say Thank You to God for everything.

God bless us all, Amen

Barry Bowden

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Helping to avoid preventable blindness in the Third World

Thank you to members of St Michael's who have supported fund-raising for the Sightsavers charity.

The proceeds of the sale of craft items have been sent to this charity, which works across 30 countries including Asia and Africa.

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Multiply



Noah opened up the ark and let all the animals out, telling them to "Go forth and multiply!" He began to close the great doors of the ark when he noticed that there were two snakes still sitting in a dark corner. Concerned, he said to them: "Didn't you hear me? You can go now. Go forth and multiply." "We can't," said the snakes sadly. "We're adders."

When Christ stood in Trafalgar Square

By Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former Director of Communications with the CofE.

I'm not a big fan of statues – but my favourite was the life-sized figure of Christ that stood in London's Trafalgar Square during the Millennium celebrations.

It stood on the square's previously-empty fourth plinth, going almost unnoticed among the surrounding grand statues and with Nelson's Column towering above it.

The statue, called *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man), was built by conceptual artist Mark Wallinger and erected in 1999. He explained: "I consciously made Him life-size. We are made in God's image, and He was made in our image.

"So for the statue to stand in contrast to the overgrown relics of empire was definitely part of the plan."

The figure was made of white marble resin, and depicted Christ standing before the multitude with His head slightly bowed.

I found the statue of Christ deeply moving and kept returning to Trafalgar Square to stand and gaze at it. Because to me, the statue declared Christ's vulnerability. It stood as a reminder that the God of all creation came to earth as a man and lived among us. He gave up His

life so that we might have salvation. There, with London's traffic rushing by, pigeons coming in to land, and tourists snapping photographs of each other, Christ stood unobtrusively. Standing, you could say, at the door of our consciousness, and asking to be let in.

In a BBC interview at the time, the artist said that he wanted the statue to be an antidote to the "spiritually empty celebration" then taking place at the Millennium Dome in Greenwich.

It certainly had a deep effect on me. In April 2017, the statue of Christ was placed on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral during Easter. Again, I watched as tourists passed by not



noticing the figure. It was a modern-day parable in marble resin.

When the Apostle Paul took a stroll around Athens, he spotted the various altars and statues to the Greek gods. He found an altar 'To an Unknown God' and declared that this was "the God who made the world and everything in it" who had made Himself known in Jesus Christ.

Just as Mark Wallinger took possession of the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square for Jesus Christ – the reason for the Millennium celebrations – so Paul claimed the 'unknown God' altar in Athens for the Christian gospel.

The Bible has always been wary of putting people on pedestals. It shows us all sides of the people it describes, warts and all.

It tells us that Moses was a murderer, that David was an adulterer, that Paul persecuted the first Christians and that Peter denied Christ.

But all of us have feet of clay, and few of us deserve to be memorialised for centuries in stone or marble. Rather, we are gently encouraged to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Maybe that's the best way to make our mark in history.

What have you missed most during lockdown?

It's a good question, because it is about the things that make us tick. When I examined my list, I found obvious things – going to church, live sport on TV, meeting up with friends for a coffee or a beer.

But as I thought more deeply about it, I realised that what I missed most was TOUCH. For nearly four months I have not touched another human being!

That is an astonishing deprivation. When a baby is born, its first experiences are all of touch. The strong hands of the midwife, mother's excited and loving embrace, tiny hands reaching out to feel mummy's face. We touch our way into life.

And then it goes on. Holding hands with friends, being hugged by grandma, your first serious kiss, and perhaps a last tearful one at the end of a much-loved life.

We greet each other with a holy kiss, the Bible says. And why not?

Sight, smell, hearing and touch. Four senses. And I think lockdown has taught me that the greatest of these is touch!

Canon David Winter





Buttercups – treasure in our countryside

Buttercup! What a delicious name! Rumour has it that, as they were frequently to be found in meadows where cows grazed, they were responsible for butter's yellow colouring. So the name was an obvious choice.

However, since buttercups are poisonous and therefore are avoided as far as possible by our four-footed friends, this is somewhat unlikely. But surely, we all remember having a buttercup held under our chin to see whether the reflection proved that we liked butter! The shiny surface of the petals actually has two real purposes. Firstly, to help attract insects and secondly to act as a kind of mirror to aid the temperature regulation of the plant's reproductive organs.

We are fortunate that buttercups do not suffer from the same unpopularity as other poisonous plants, because if eaten, not only do they taste nasty, but the poison will also cause blisters in the mouth of the consumer. Extensive handling can also damage the skin, but presumably the size of bunch that many of us picked as children did not count as 'extensive'. Fortunately, Health and Safety experts do not yet seem to have forbidden this source of pleasure for little people. Incidentally, the poison is reduced as the plant dries, and hay that includes buttercups is safe for cows and horses to eat.

Buttercups help form the traditional view of the British countryside. Differing varieties range in height from small to quite tall and although at their peak in early summer, the golden blooms can often still be seen in mid-autumn. J

Heavenly Honey at Manchester Cathedral

A team of 'Volition' volunteer beekeepers have been looking after colonies of over 300,000 bees on the roof of Manchester Cathedral since 2011. The bees happily forage around the Medieval Quarter and a three mile radius of the city centre to produce Heavenly Honey. The operation is overseen by Cathedral Canon and Head Beekeeper, Adrian Rhodes.

Heavenly Honey is sold to raise funds for the Cathedral's volunteer project Volition Community, which supports the long-term unemployed in Greater Manchester to gain employment via volunteering, building confidence and providing a variety of development opportunities including looking after and caring for the bees. The honey has limited availability and can be purchased from the Cathedral by contacting 0161 833 2220 (extension 242)

Parish Notices

From the July registers:

Funerals:

We pray for the family and friends of:

Peter Hammond

There were no baptisms or weddings in July

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**Free national phonline bringing worship
and prayer**



Government figures show that 2.5 million people aged 75 and above have never used the internet. And so, to help them, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently launched a free national phonline to bring worship and prayer into the homes of those without access to the internet.

Daily Hope, which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England.

CONTACT DETAILS

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