

Dear friends,

I only got back to the U.K. on Tuesday evening so this email is a day late. It is hard to comprehend that only on Monday afternoon I was swimming in a warm Caribbean Sea in a temperature that my phone said in the morning was 29 degrees, but humidity would make it seem like 35 degrees! We arrived back at Gatwick which was reassuringly cold, grey and pouring with rain which is the perennial “Welcome home” sign for all returning Brits.

So, after the inevitable “catch-up scramble” to get back up to speed, these are the readings for this coming Sunday.

Sunday 17th March – Lent 5

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter’s and Margaret Scrivener will preside at all Saints and St. Michael’s at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Jeremiah 31: 31-34. A glorious prophesy of the covenant made between God and his people and revealed and inaugurated through his Son, Jesus Christ. A Covenant where God’s law would be written “in their hearts” via His Spirit. Knowledge of God would be discernible internally and all our sins will be forgiven.

Hebrews 5: 5-10. Christ is our “eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek”. Melchizedek has no genealogy so has no predecessor or successor so is forever. A high priest must be called and appointed, he must be human (able to empathize with human suffering and weakness and represents that humanity before God) and his prime role is to offer sacrifice. Jesus fulfils all those roles (as the sacrifice offered is his own self-sacrifice) so is our eternal priest after our old friend Melchizedek.

John 12: 20-33. Up until this point in John’s gospel Jesus has rebuked people with the sentence “My hour has not yet come”. In verse 12:23 that abruptly comes to an end. The “hour” refers to his crucifixion when the glory of God will be fully revealed in him. The hour is a time of confrontation between the world and the kingdom of God. Verse 25 is often heard as life-denying, but he is connecting his own death with a certain understanding that life cannot be hoarded away and only those prepared to give up everything, can receive “eternal life” both now and in the hereafter. All people will eventually be drawn to Him whose death is also his exaltation.

Andrew Allan, Louise's brother is making progress after his stroke but still extremely poorly and Louise and I are both travelling to Lancaster on Friday to visit him in hospital.

Come and see!

The RMC Lent course this year will be the Exeter Diocesan course is called "Come and see". The dates will be on Wednesdays - Feb. 28th, March 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th in the Peter Hall at 5pm. (Not 7pm as I previously stated). While it is not strictly necessary to bring anything, a Bible will be good for reference, as well as an open, honest and enquiring mind.

Thought for Today

Some locations are described as paradise because of their Topography and/or climate which is why they attract people to visit of course. But as with Adam and Eve, you put people in paradise and trouble is never far away.

We cannot separate ourselves from our troubles or concerns no matter how paradisiacal the location. A hurt that hurts in Budleigh is a hurt that hurts just as much in St. Lucia. Our location is external to us and the answers (if there be an answer) lies within us. Our sense of well-being, our peaceful state, our peace with the world, our strength and resilience, come from within. No-one can be "happy" 24 hours a day – because happiness and sadness are transient emotions, but we can foster an inner peace that goes deeper than that. Faith is an integral part of achieving that sense of peace, and that faith is the ground on which we can adopt practices that re-enforce that cause that faith to flower and bear fruit in our lives. Matthew 7:16 tells us that this is how we will recognise his true followers from the false prophets because the Holy Spirit encourages their growth within us. Peace of mind and the fruits of the Spirit are linked together and is an eternal possession that can't be taken away from us by outward circumstances and are not reliant on how much money or possessions who have or your geographic location.

The Prayer for Today is by George W. Briggs.

**O Father of lights,
With whom there is no variation nor shadow of turning,
Who abides steadfast as the stars of heaven,
Give us grace to rest upon your eternal changelessness.
And in thy faithfulness find peace
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Love and peace,
Martin