

Dear friends,

I was at All Saints for Harvest festival and what a lovely and well attended service it was! As John Archibald was taking the service at St. Michael's I was able to join the congregation for coffee and cakes after the service which was a treat. There was a magnificent amount of food items offered which is wending its way to Exmouth foodbank as will anything collected at our churches.

**Louise** and I then went to the Harvest lunch at St. Peter's to a hall that was near capacity for a sit-down meal and the atmosphere was buzzing. Mandy produced a wonderful buffet (like the one we enjoyed at my 20th anniversary of ordination) and at this harvest meal we were also celebrating Canon Mike Williams' 30th year of ordination. His wife Jilly said to me before the lunch that it had certainly felt like thirty years as well! In lieu of a Grace we sang a specially adapted version of "We plough the fields and scatter" that extolled the benefits of living in Budleigh Salterton.

**Note:** We are away in India for a couple of weeks so there will be a short hiatus for a while in this "soul food" communication but I'll be looking forward to returning and carrying on the good work of the RMC.

## Sunday 8th October – 18 after Trinity – Proper 22

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Margaret Scrivener will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively. Trevor will also be presiding at Choral evensong at St. Peter's at 6pm in the evening.

**Isaiah 5: 1-7.** A prophesy that predicts doom and destruction for the nation of Israel. God had led them to a rich land of milk and honey but instead of practicing justice for rich and poor alike, He witnessed bloodshed and debauchery and idolatry instead of righteousness. His beloved people (Israel) had forgotten and betrayed him, becoming complacent and ungrateful.

**Philippians 3: 4-14.** A very important take on the law versus grace debate that continues to this day. Paul says that he was a strict adherent of the law, a pharisee whose adherence to the law (Torah) was exemplary, but he now considers all of that "loss" and it palls when compared to faith in the Grace of God revealed to him in Jesus Christ. As Paul was also to write "The letter

kills but the spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians) Strict observance of the law is far less important than following the spirit of the law.

**Matthew 21: 33-46.** Jesus uses the prophecy from Isaiah today as the basis for his own parable. Again the vineyard is Israel, and the landowner is God and the people sent to collect the harvest are the prophets and the Son and heir is Jesus himself. He predicts his own demise and the hands of the Israelites and then asks how they think God will react to this state of affairs? This is Jesus telling us that we have to produce fruit in accordance with being embraced by the Kingdom of God. Fruit that will last and how God will recognise his own.

## Thought for Today

As you might expect, I am very much looking forward to travelling to India. The sights, sounds, colours and smells are legendary (as are Delhi belly, poverty and disease). While we are primarily visiting family in Chennai, it is a little appreciated fact that Chennai (formally known as Madras) was the final resting place of St. Thomas. The same St Thomas, who wouldn't believe until he actually seen the risen Christ in the flesh. But also the same St. Thomas who when invited to put his fingers in the wounds simply responded with “My Lord and my God” the most direct and straightforward declaration of the divinity of Jesus Christ in the gospels (John 20:28). We will be visiting the St. Thomas Basilica in Chennai as well as the site of his eventual murder (also in Chennai). The most famous apocryphal gospel outside of the Bible is the “Gospel of Thomas”, a collection of sayings attributed to the man which shows some striking connections to Eastern mysticism, that would fit the location of his demise of course, but also there is an indigenous St. Thomas church in India called the “Mar Thoma church” that claims that they are directly linked to St. Thomas in the first century, predating the introduction of Christianity by Portuguese, British, French and Dutch colonialists by 1,500 years or so. There is a majority Christian state in Kerala of course but Christians have a presence in many other places also and in fact our stay in South Goa is near the catholic fishing village of Benaulim. Anyway, on my return I promise not to sprinkle my sermons with too many “When I was in India” statements and I promise not to preach in Tamil, but travel does indeed broaden the mind, and will certainly inform my views and outlook.

**The Prayer for Today.** Churches named after the Apostle Thomas aren't very common in the West but here is one I gleaned from the website of St. Thomas Parish church in Tucson Arizona.

**Almighty and ever living God, who didst strengthen thine apostle Thomas with sure and certain faith in thy Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in thy sight; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.**

Love and peace,  
Martin