

Dear friends,

There is a Light at the end of the tunnel in that a vaccine for Covid-19 has been successfully trialled which is apparently 90% successful. We all hold our breath that the promise of a return to normal life now looks genuinely on the cards. But in the meantime, these are difficult times for us all, but I hope you all managed to commemorate remembrance Sunday in your own way privately.

I know many people turned up in their own time to honour the fallen to avoid drawing a crowd and I laid a wreath on behalf of the RMC which complimented the others laid by others to pay their respects at the memorial in East Budleigh.



Filmed service

Our next project after the successful Harvest venture will be our **Advent** service. I have prepared the liturgy; Stephen has recorded the music and we now need four people to do the readings! Anyone fancy doing that and being immortalised on film just let me know! The recordings take place in St.Peter's church.

Sunday 15th November – 2 before Advent

Zephaniah 1: 7, 12-18. The God of blood-curdling vengeance is given full rein here. What starts with carnage against Israel ends with carnage against the whole world. There is a certain logic here though. If the Jews are supposed to be “a light to the gentiles” but in fact produce only darkness, then their fate will be shared. At any rate the passage warns against indifference or neutrality towards God who will “not do good, nor will he do harm” (v.12)

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11. There is no timetable for Christ's return and so Paul urges constant readiness using martial metaphors of a breastplate and a helmet. In other words, for a Christian, the answer to the question “When will the day of the Lord come?” is always “Now!”. This is a message that Christians living 2000 years after these words were written still need to take on board. God stands at both the beginning and end of all life “the alpha and the omega” and the question is not so much of timing, but remaining faithful to the promise that Christ means salvation.

Matthew 25: 14-30. So, “God supports the capitalist system” is probably not supposed to be the take-home message of this piece. A “talent” was a weight of about 100 pounds so about 6000 Denarii, so to have even one was an extraordinary amount of money to play with. To have five meant extreme wealth. The church has always allegorized the talent to mean something more like our modern understanding of “Talent” or more like “spiritual riches” or “spiritual gifts”. If you have been given these gifts we should use them, whatever they are, for the good of the whole church to build up the body. Squandering a spiritual gift is almost a direct rebuke to God. The message is of course that whatever we have, we should use it for the good of the body of Christ so that it functions well, firing on all cylinders!

Musical interlude!

Bill Bailey is doing very well on “strictly” at the moment and here he tackles that wonderful hymn “Jerusalem” in his unique style. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wRS-RvzkE8>

Thought for the day – I can see the light!

The news that there is a vaccine on the horizon is the good news that will eventually become old news as we get used to not fearing catching anything every time we go out. But I really do hope that some of my new habits will continue as the fear eventually recedes from society.

I hope to continue my daily exercise and yoga. I hope we'll continue to keep to a healthy diet. I hope I'll read and observe nature just as much.

And I might treat myself to a proper haircut instead of my home grown ones and I'll finally be able to try stuff on in shops and buy some clothes that actually fit now I've lost so much weight- I can't wait. And I won't miss the experience of people who bark at us to “Stand back” or “sanitise your hands” or “please wait because there's already three people in the shop” and we can again dream of a foreign holiday next year – O Bliss.

This news is the best early Christmas present anyone could have asked for – now we just have to manage the dark winter months and the present lockdown and whatever follows that until the vaccine(s) finally comes on stream. But these restrictions are suddenly much easier to bear because we have glimpsed the light at the end of the tunnel.

That this news comes at around Advent is a wonderful coincidence. The most common Advent motif is “Darkness to light” and anticipates the coming of “the light of the world” in the physical manifestation that is Jesus Christ. The Christian revelation is exactly that all the law and the prophets leads inexorably to Jesus Christ and in Advent we honour all those who looked forward to the promise and never saw him revealed.

The Prayer for Today is an Advent prayer from the Church of South India

**Almighty God who in many and various ways
Spoke to your chosen people by the prophets
And has given us, in thy son our saviour Jesus Christ
The fulfilment of the hope of Israel;
Hasten the day when all things shall be subject to Him,
Who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit**

Ever one God, world without end, Amen

Love and peace,
Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk