

Dear friends,

Our figs are now ripening - lovely with a bit of Greek Yoghurt and honey. Actually, everything goes well with Greek Yoghurt and honey, as our crop of raspberries, blackberries and now some early plums bears testimony. We made cucumber and garlic soup (very healthy!) with some huge cucumbers from the greenhouse and after church on Sunday we went to harvest a massive crop of sloe berries quite near our house and have laid down a few litres of sloe Gin for future consumption. (Not so healthy?) Louise remarked last night sitting in our garden at about 9pm just how alive our garden is with both plant and animal life. As my sides are crimson with about a dozen insect bites, I had to agree.

I know there are a lot of restrictions in church at the moment, but my appreciation of worship just grows and grows despite them and the numbers at worship are holding steady with some welcome newcomers. Sunday morning at St. Peter's was a joy and for those who wanted one, followed by a cup of coffee which was a welcome surprise.

We will be away from Wednesday for a few nights away in North Devon, so no Saturday email this week, but I'll be back for the Sunday services. This week I will be presiding at All Saints East Budleigh at the 9.30am service and at St. Michael's Otterton at the 11am service. Reverend Karen Young will preside at the 10am at St. Peter's.

I have recorded a YouTube reflection based on an aspect of the following readings called "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine". If you'd like to watch it you can access it by clicking here. <https://youtu.be/wEU7B8kuNmQ> You can also access this reflection and all recent "soul food" emails as well by clicking on our website. <https://www.raleighmissioncommunity.org.uk/> But if you prefer to read it you can do so by clicking on my Blog. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2020/08/blessed-assurance-jesus-is-mine.html>

Sunday 16th August – Trinity 10 (Proper 15)

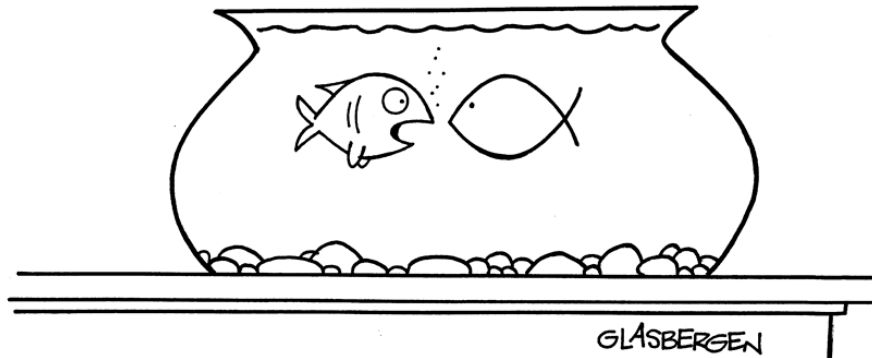
Isaiah 56:1, 6-8. A giant olive branch to all the foreigners and outsiders offering inclusion and salvation to them even while they are not part of the “chosen people” of Israel. “For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations”. That this was written at all presupposes that there were many foreigners living in Jerusalem at this time (Just after the return from exile in about 515BC) and disputes amongst the Jews as to whether they could be included in their religious and community life. Isaiah says yes and one of the main requirements for followers of God’s ways, recognising that the covenant with Israel was ultimately for the whole of mankind (Israel was to be a light to the gentiles – Isaiah 42:6 and quoted in Luke 2:32), was to maintain Justice

Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32. Paul continues to wrestle with the position of Jewish people by reminding people that he himself is a Jew. In the intervening passages (omitted in our lectionary) Paul warns Christians against any sense of having replaced the Jews by noting that we have rather been “grafted in” to the Israelite people (v. 17). The covenant made with Israel is irrevocable, but God’s grace is boundless.

Matthew 15: (10-20),21-28. The longer version of this lection includes the accusation that the pharisees are “blind guides” and that what defiles a person is not unclean foods but unclean hearts. The main lection continues the day’s theme of inclusion in God’s salvation with the story of the Canaanite woman (Mark calls her a Syrophenician). It is not impossible that Jesus used the term “dogs” to refer to gentiles, as he was fully human so his outlook and sympathies would be conditioned by his Jewishness. What can’t be translated of course is his tone of voice or demeanour, and the smart reply from the woman suggests that she was far from taking offense. We the reader of this gospel are invited to join with Jesus and cross the barriers of race and culture.

The lighter side!

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“Can’t we talk about something besides religion for a change?”

And, from Mike in Gainford,
Did you hear about the dyslexic Yorkshireman?
He wore a cat flap

Thought for the day

It was while admiring the view above Luppitt from a ridge that I slipped in a cowpat. Luckily, I am still of an age that I can fall and not break my hip. Claire my daughter said that it would make a much funnier story if I had landed in the cow pat, but I missed it by inches. The “walk” turned into an orienteering expedition through barely marked and obscure paths and deep bogs. My trousers still bear the marks of sinking up to my calves in mud. We had to avoid gangs of frisky bullocks blocking our path and steep ascents in hot sun. Such is life and it does serve as a metaphor for life itself. Our path is rarely uncomplicated and marked by unforeseen hazards and things that throw us off track. It is a universal truth that we have no control over what happens to us or when, but what we do have control over is how we react to events. What determined that we slogged on and reached our destination was determination and self-preservation, a strong sense of enjoying the beauty of the journey wherever it took us and having a goal. For a Christian negotiating life, we have a goal but that goal is also our company and guidance on the journey itself. I heard a Christian apologist, Bishop Robert Barron say recently about prayer, that we pray to the Father with Jesus’ arm

around our shoulder with the Holy Spirit as the loving link between us. If we consider life as a prayer, then imagining walking through life with Jesus's arm around your shoulder is not a bad way to negotiate the trials and tribulations of life. Comfort and guidance always available, no matter what befalls us, is invaluable when negotiating the cowpats and bogs of life and directions are available when we get lost.

The Prayer for Today is by St. Patrick

**May the strength of God pilot us,
May the power of God preserve us,
May the wisdom of God instruct us,
May the hand of God protect us,
May the way of God direct us,
May the shield of God defend us,
May the host of God guard us against the snares of evil
And the temptations of the world.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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