

Dear friends,

“If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two imposters both the same”

That line from Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If” have stood me in good stead, from losing and winning at Scrabble to the aftermath of the defeat by Italy in the European football final on Sunday evening. Winning or losing has to be kept in perspective. In the great scheme of things it is all pretty meaningless whether we won or lost the match but it would have provided a very short lived feeling of exhilaration. Mind you, Louise’s brother Matthew was at the match and I don’t know if he is feeling quite so sanguine.

Kew Gardens really is a National Treasure. Contrary to our tortuous journey to Derbyshire last week, our drive to Richmond in West London couldn’t have been easier and after our birthday dinner for my daughter Claire who is 31 (I got her age wrong last week-me culpa) we wiled away a few hours the next day in this oasis beside the Thames before parting for the equally trouble-free journey back to Devon.

The services at St. Peter’s on Sunday were a little different because the church has been re-arranged to accommodate the Music festival, including no coffee after the service (!) but I was assured by Judith that coffee will be resumed next Sunday. My sermon used the vivid picture of the plumb line dropped into society used by Amos (this refers to the law), and the definitive eternal plumb line that is Jesus Christ dropped into the world 2000 years ago against which we can see how we measure up. If you’d like to hear what I said just click here. <https://youtu.be/Dpv7ROt2dQA>
Alternatively, you can read it on my Blog by clicking here. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/07/gods-plumb-line.html>

Sunday 18th July – 7th after Trinity

I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael’s this Sunday and the reverend Chris Cant will be presiding at St. Peter’s. At All Saints there is also the baptism of twins, Daisy and Alice, in the service, which is lovely.

Jeremiah 23: 1-6. Kings have long been referred to as “shepherds” of their people from ancient times. Some Egyptian pharaohs hold a shepherd’s crook in their images. Either through negligence or deliberately (according to

which translation you use) the people have been dispersed, which leads us to suppose a post-Babylonian exile date. But this piece prophesies a time in the future when these bad shepherds will be superseded by a wise shepherd who will rule with justice and bring salvation to his people. As Christians we obviously see Jesus Christ as that “once and future King”.

Ephesians 2: 11-22. Christians together are being built into a living temple where God dwells within. This spiritual building of flesh and blood has Jesus Christ as our foundation stone and there are no barriers to membership of this spiritual edifice. The writer has in mind Jews and gentiles, but in our modern context we emphasise that all differences of race, ethnicity and culture as being no barrier to membership of this new universal body.

Mark 6: 30-34, 52-56. All who came to Jesus were healed is the take home message of this piece of scripture. Healing and wholeness are what our faith gives as a gift to all that accept it. Healing and wholeness are not restricted to your physical condition but has a wide ranging, all encompassing meaning that includes your mental and spiritual condition and extends to the societal level of living in peace with justice also.

Roger Conant painting.

Sir Walter Raleigh isn't the only famous son that comes from East Budleigh. Roger Conant, who founded Salem Massachusetts (amongst other things) is another notable historical character who came from East Budleigh. The mill stone from the Conant family mill sits outside our church hall to this day. John Washington, of the Budleigh art society has painted a picture of this famous son called “Blessed are the peacemakers” based on a real incident where he calmed a violent confrontation between soldiers and Budleigh Salters in New England and would like to offer it to the church to hang on the same wall where the painting of Sir Walter hangs. Of course, to hang it the church needs a faculty (church planning permission) and the first step is to get PCC consent to do so. To this end the painting will be displayed in All Saints during the service on the 1st August and after the service (hopefully with a cup of coffee) John and a history expert will talk about Roger, his life, and the symbolism of the painting.

Thought for the Day.

I would say that many people believe they want to attain happiness and indeed the USA enshrines the pursuit of happiness into its declaration of independence which has always had a powerful draw.

I take a slightly more nuanced view – and we may be just talking semantics here- in that I think a permanent state of happiness is unattainable (so pursuit is the right word used) and therefore unrealistic. What I think people call “happiness” is in fact what I recognise as contentment. Being content and at peace is what we all really want. Happiness and despair are both highs and lows that appear and disappear at various times– hopefully transitory (certainly in the case of sadness and despair) and afterwards we return – God willing - to that permanent state of peace and contentment.

At the blessing in church, I don't wish people happiness, I evoke the blessing “the peace of God that passes all understanding”, a state of mind / soul that Christians aspire to which has the power to transcend our physical, financial, and social constraints.

While we obviously do pray for physical, mental and societal healing, our “soul” can aspire to that divine peace that doesn't depend on our personal circumstances.

So, I pray for you all that you experience contentment and peace. The happy times and the sad times will come and go and we can learn from them, but they are oscillations around a hopefully contented and peace filled life.

The Prayer for Today is by Frank Colquhoun

Heavenly Father,

We bring to you in prayer people who are suffering in mind body or spirit.

We remember especially those facing chronic and incurable illness.

Those cast down by the cares and sorrows of daily life.

Those who have lost their faith and the future looks dark.

In your mercy, maintain their courage, lift their burdens and renew their faith,

That they may find in you their strength, their comfort and their peace,

For Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

Love and peace,

Martin

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