

Dear friends,

It took us fifty minutes to join the M5 from East Budleigh because of the Devon county show, three and a half hours just to get to Gloucester services and eight hours in all to reach Tideswell in Derbyshire on an absolutely heaving motorway system. But whatever the trials of getting there was more than made up for by a beautiful wedding between two lovely people in a stunning location. St. John the Baptist Tideswell is known as the “cathedral of the peaks” and just like Louise and I, Katy and Nathan met through “Christian connection” the on-line dating service. The Sun broke through the clouds for the photographs after the service, though a monsoon erupted during the dinner in the Marquee drowning out the speeches at one point. A wonderful occasion and the journey back was much easier, taking only five hours. Life is certainly getting back to normal – lovely weddings, heaving motorways and all!

Hallelujah! Greeted the announcement from health secretary Sajid Javid in the commons when he confirmed that the restrictions on communal singing will also be lifted after 19th July so get ready on Sunday the 25th to raise the roof!

Sunday 11th July – 6th after Trinity – Proper 10

I'm off to London to celebrate my daughter Claire's 30th Birthday on Friday but I'll be back to preside at both services at St. Peter's and the Reverend Colin Randall will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's.

Amos 7: 7-15. The plumb line means that God is going to establish a standard of behaviour and will no longer be indifferent to how people live. We don't know if Amos directly prophesied Jeroboam's violent death but according to 2 Kings 14:29 Jeroboam died a peaceful death after ruling Israel for 41 years. We do know however that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was laid waste by the Assyrians in 721 BC which would accord with his prophesy against Israel.

Ephesians 1: 3-14. “Blessing” in Greek is both an act of praise or thanksgiving or an act of bestowing a gift on another, so God is to be blessed for God's blessings. The gifts bestowed are redemption, forgiveness, wisdom

and faith and the only appropriate response to that is one of giving thanks and praise. This should prompt us to recall that the chief end of human life according to the Westminster confession (1646) is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Mark 6: 14-29. This longest piece in the gospels not directly about Jesus is drawing a parallel between the deaths of both men at the hand of weak vacillating leaders who left to their own devices would have spared them but under the influence of other circumstances order their executions. Speaking truth to power has always been a dangerous thing to do and having friends in high places (Herod respects John) never guarantees your safety.

Budleigh Music festival starts this Friday and St. Peter's church is the sole venue this year with 23 separate events, so brilliant in one respect but plenty of upheaval is also only to be expected. Our Sunday services should proceed as normal, but our Wednesday communion service (next week) may have to move from the Lady chapel to the High altar for that Wednesday alone as the soft chairs will have been laid out and numbered, the organ console moved to the corner and there may be others milling around also. Bear with us! The benefit to St. Peter's in terms of exposure (and of course financially) outweighs the logistical problems for one week.

Musical interlude!

Well, it just had to be. Come on England! Frank Skinner and David Baddiel in the official 2021 version of Three Lions (Football's coming home). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6BDncfgm9s>

Thought for the day.

We all sometimes go through times of spiritual drought. Everything seems empty and pointless. Hymns, sermons, prayers, rituals leave us cold and even life itself can seem remote from us, like a man standing in the rain, nose pressed up against Dixon's window, watching life happening on TV screens, going on somewhere else where people are engaged, happy and having adventures. I am not going to speculate on why this should be but have noted that a way back to engagement with God is to engage with life and see God within all things. Disengagement from both God and life, for a Christian at least, seem to go hand in hand and if we believe that God is the author and sustainer of all things this shouldn't surprise us. God is the Lord of life and it

is one of the greatest insights of the Christian way, in my view, that God can be apprehended through the ordinary stuff of life, including other people. A deep dive into life is a deep dive into God. This is the basis of a eucharistic spirituality which sees God in all things and is thankful for them and their creator. Eucharist means thanksgiving, and in giving thanks using ordinary “stuff” like bread and wine we should not keep that view of life locked inside the safe confines of a church building but let it bleed out into the way we see all “stuff”. All life is Holy and a means of making contact with the God who is in all things. Our relationship with both God and life can be distant, cold and uninvolved, or close, loving and engaged and they usually mirror each other.

The prayer for Today is not technically a prayer but for me is the essence of what Christian prayer evokes in the soul and what our Ephesians reading today leads us to spiritually. William Blake’s “Auguries of innocence” is too long for this email, but I quote the start and finish of the poem.

**To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour
A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage
God Appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day**

Love and peace,
Martin

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