

Dear friends,

Due to computer contacts trouble last week, I have reassembled my contact lists for soul food. This amount to well over 300 contacts but I may have made one or two errors so if you don't normally receive this email just let me know.

This will be a busy but I hope rewarding week with our event called "A seat at the table: engaging church members with science" tonight (refreshments at 7pm: meeting starts at 7.30pm) and our away day at All Saints church Sidmouth on Saturday from 10am – 4pm which I have called "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain" (Psalm 127:1) a quiet and spiritual day when we will endeavour to tune in to what God is saying to us as a community.

Important Note: For anyone driving to All Saints Sidmouth, apparently the road through Colaton Raleigh (B3178) is to be closed from Saturday to Monday so unless you take the longer way round via Woodbury Park hotel (B3180) you might want to brave the direct route through Otterton. And then in Sidmouth to avoid the road works on the high street area use station road (B3176) to access All Saints Road.

Sunday 13th February – 3 before Lent (Epiphany 6 in Lectionary)

I will be presiding at both morning services at St. Peter's and also at choral evensong at 6pm. Fr Peter will be presiding at the 9.30 service at All Saints and the 11am at St. Michael's.

Jeremiah 17: 5-10. There is no hope of survival let alone flourishing in a parched and waterless environment (the world without God) and you can't trust human resources because our hearts are fickle and devious. The point of this passage is that it is only their faith in God that provides the resources needed to face their troubles in faith and confidence.

1 Corinthians 15: 12-20. Some Corinthians, while perhaps not questioning the resurrection of Jesus but certainly were questioning their own resurrection. This questions the whole basis of the gospel according to Paul. If you deny your own resurrection your faith is futile. Christ's and your own resurrection are linked. To deny it makes us people to be pitied and cuts off

the branch of faith that we are sitting on. He couldn't have made it any clearer!

Luke 6: 17-26. Luke's "sermon on the plain" is much less well known than Matthew's "sermon on the mount" A crude paraphrase could be "Things are not always what they seem. Those who seem to be prospering now may not be, not in God's sight. Those who seem to be suffering may be blessed, at least in God's sight. Paul puts it rather differently in 1 Cor. 1:25 "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength".



The first daffodils of the year have now appeared in our garden!

Thought for the Day

Nothing makes the point quite so clearly to me that we depend on each other as when my computer goes wrong (grrr) or something unexpected happens. I, like most people know just enough to get by and do most of what I want to do and then something inexplicable happens and I am all at sea, completely frustrated and completely dependent on someone riding to the rescue for whom what has gone wrong seems absolutely obvious.

This happened last week when inexplicably all my contacts were lost for my weekly email from my contact list. Louise knew how to cobble together the sending out of last week's email by copying and pasting the previous week's "BCC" lists but no idea how to rectify the main problem and a friend was required to put things right. Knowing about computers and how they work is a first world problem but no less anxiety producing for those it affects, but this small incident points to the much wider truth that the world is so interconnected and that we are totally reliant on others. We rely on a complex web of people and organizations that supports the smooth running of our country and our lives. What measure of control and self-reliance we do have we jealously guard, but it has severe limits and in the wider context of our society the international trade routes and supply chains – much in the news lately – together with energy supplies reveal just how little control even our nation has over so many things.

When you apply that same truth to our lives it becomes much more obvious that we have so little, perhaps negligible control over what happens to us. The pandemic seems to have made that much clearer to a lot of people. The gospel message to us for next Sunday seems to me to be saying. While you have little control over what happens to you, you do have control over the way you react. In the face of the changes and chances of life, put your faith in God. He is the creator and sustainer of all life, and He has the ultimate control.

The Prayer for Today is quirky and lovely, but the author is unknown.

**Give us Lord a bit o' sun
A bit o' work and a bit o' fun
Give us all in th' struggle and splutter
Our daily bread and a bit o' butter.
Give us health, our keep to make,
An' a bit to spare for poor folk' sake,
Give us sense, for we are some of us duffers,
An' a heart to feel for all that suffers.**

Love and peace,
Martin