

Dear friends,

Sunday was a busy day with four services but the bonus was that I got to be in all three churches on a Sunday. By the time Evensong arrived I was tired but all went exactly as planned. I'd started the day with a croaky voice so was pleased that it held up all the way through.

**Family trauma** continues to colour the backdrop to our lives but prayer never comes so easily as when you really need it.

**Next Wednesday** the 24th September at 7pm is our next Joint PCC meeting for everyone that sits on your individual Parochial church councils.

**I preside** at so many funerals and interments that I rarely, if ever, mention one. But on Saturday, the funeral of one of the "Budleigh Boys" – Paul Wilkins took place in St. Peter's. I had met Paul a couple of weeks before he died to plan his funeral and at the said funeral, I had to read a poem written by his son Charlie and wife Sarah to "Daddy" because understandably neither were capable at the time to deliver it. It is one of the few times where it was a struggle to keep it all together and my voice nearly broke.

### **Sunday 21st September – Trinity 14 – Proper 20**

I will be presiding at both morning services at St. Peter's and Chris Cant is presiding at All Saints at 9.30 and Colin Randall is presiding at St. Michael's at 11am..

**Amos 8: 4-7.** I like to see Amos as a "Blunt Yorkshireman" telling it how it is. (Heaven knows what he'd make of that comparison.) Amos's view of creation is that morality is part of that created order and anyone who abuses morality, that affects the whole created order. Here, the powerful prey on and swindle the poor at a time of national distress. God declares his displeasure and vows that He won't forget that.

**1 Timothy 2: 1-7.** Everyone is included as a recipient of God's Grace. God shows no partiality to either a beggar or a king. His wish is that everyone will repent and be saved. If that is God's will, it is a perfectly legitimate Christian hope also that all people will be saved. How that works in practice is above my pay grade but I am content to trust that God's perfect will and wisdom will sort that out. In God we trust.

**Luke 16: 1-13.** On first reading this might be trying to commend dishonesty but this can be more to do with how we read scripture Speaking about this very parable John Calvin wrote "How stupid it is to want to interpret it in every detail!! Christ simply meant that the children of this world are more diligent in their concern for their own fleeting interests than the sons of light for their eternal well-being." Jesus (The Lord) applauds not the unjust steward's roguery but his resourcefulness.

### **Thought for the Day**

Keeping a professional distance at a funeral is my job I suppose and only rarely does that distance narrow as in the case of a funeral I took last week which was particularly emotive for me. The first family member for whom I took his funeral was my Uncle John many years ago. It was a privilege, and I thought it was my duty to do so, partly because something inside of me balked at letting a "stranger" take the funeral of such

a dear but ordinary working man and I wanted to do him justice. Of course, I was younger and more confident then. For the same reasons I took my mum's funeral, and also because I am the only one in the family who the others look to, to take charge of these occasions. Of course, when it came to Alex, my first wife who died in 2010 I was grateful that some close clerical friends stepped in, for which I am eternally grateful. I just couldn't have done it, and although I did speak at the service it was short and sweet. I was fully prepared to take my dad's funeral but actually I was a bit peeved when the priest of the church in North Wales told me he wouldn't let me because it was a bad idea. That, in the end, was the best thing he could have done and so I was able to properly grieve at the service. And he was less of a "stranger" because my sister had started going to church and knew and respected him which gave me more confidence. I am speaking about funerals but of course, even in a Sunday service or any service actually you are always a little bit detached because the liturgy and its conduct are down to you so you always have half an eye on what is supposed to be happening next. That makes it quite hard to worship yourself although through the years that becomes much easier. That is why it is so easy for a priest to lose contact with his faith if he is not careful and why a personal prayer life is so important. It doesn't matter how long or short it is, how complicated or easy it is, it has to work for you. Keeping up regular contact with God is all important.

**The Prayer for Today** was prayed by Jacob Astly, a Royalist commander just before the battle of Edgehill in 1642. It teaches us to recognise God's presence in whatever we may be facing this day.

**Lord, help me to realise today  
That you will be speaking to me  
Through the events of the day'  
Through people,  
Through things,  
And through all creation.  
Give me ears, eyes and heart to perceive you,  
However veiled your presence may be.  
Give me insight to see through the exterior of things  
To the interior truth.  
Give me your spirit of discernment.  
O lord, you know how busy I must be this day.  
If I forget you, do not forget me.  
Amen.**

Love and peace,

Martin