

Dear friends,

In hindsight, it was probably not the best idea to have a walking holiday in 35-degree heat. On our first walk we got a third of the way through, an hour and three quarters uphill, when Louise said that we ought to turn around. By the time we returned to our village we were dangerously spent. I'd not ever experienced such oppressive heat. The guy behind the desk at the hotel told us, for safety's sake, not to walk in the afternoons because it was too hot so logistically we couldn't complete the set walks but we managed to get some lovely walking done in this beautiful part of Spain. We'd always wanted to stay in one of the famous "white villages" of Andalusia and Zuheros was gorgeous complete with a Moorish castle, a church that was originally a Mosque, a couple of bars and very steep streets. We nearly missed our flight home because of extreme queues at Malaga airport but that, as they say, is another story.

I was glad that so many people came to St. Peter's and were able to listen to our mission partners in Cambodia, Wendy and Yong Lim recount their exploits in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Yong mentioned to me after the service how pleasantly surprised he was that the church was apparently thriving which made me feel quite proud (Is that a sin? Answers on a postcard)

Well done to everyone in East Budleigh involved with putting on the scarecrow festival last weekend. This is organised by the "Friends of All Saints church" and over £4,000 was raised to support the upkeep of this historic church. A heroic effort given the vagaries of the British weather on Saturday.

Sunday 22nd June – 1st after Trinity – Proper 7

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at both services at St. Peter's and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Isaiah 65: 1-9. The first seven verses describe the condemnation of the Israeli nation for ignoring God and indulging in pagan practices and imagining that they are spiritually superior to other nations. The last two verses concede though that not everyone is like that and there will be a remnant worth saving.

Galatians 3: 23-29. A lovely little vignette that contrasts being under a disciplinarian God, bound by rules and regulations, with being a free child of God bound together by love. We enjoy a radical equality as God's children where no-one has privileged access to God based on race, social standing or gender.

Luke 8: 26-39. This story is a nightmare for a preacher in the modern West for the assumption that Demons are a cause of mental derangement and because of the fate of a herd of pigs who surely didn't deserve to die. Transporting ourselves back to a first century Middle Eastern mindset is hard. We are in Gentile territory which prefigures the internationalizing of the Jewish religion. And we also have the healing of a man from both physical and social exclusion. There are many, many demons "Legion" and when they are expelled from the man they are transferred to a herd of swine, which are "unclean" in Jewish eyes anyway. The swine become suicidal and rush headlong into the lake to drown. The main points are that Jesus is concerned with the world outside Judaism and that in God is found healing and wholeness.

Thought for the Day

The history, religion and culture of the European continent could have been so different if Islam had not been repelled in two famous incidents at opposite ends of the continent. In a pincer movement in Eastern Europe the Ottoman Empire was only beaten back at the gates of Vienna (In celebration the “croissant” was born, the sweet pastry formed in the shape of the Muslim crescent moon). In the West, in Spain, a huge chunk of the Iberian peninsular was the Moorish kingdom of El Andalus and Cordoba once rivalled Baghdad as a centre of Islamic art, culture and learning. Emblematic of this culture clash we were privileged to visit the Mezquita - Cathedral in Cordoba last week. The Muslims built a fantastic and rather beautiful Mosque over the original site of a church. When eventually the Christians pushed the Moors out of Spain, instead of destroying the Mezquita (Spanish for Mosque) they built a Cathedral in the centre of it and Christianized it. Nowadays, Mass is said there every day. The Mezquita is a huge and beautiful tourist attraction nowadays and stands as a testament to the uneasy and sometimes symbiotic relationship between Christianity and Islam. It is an uneasy peace. In the West we have Mass said in the middle of a Mosque in Cordoba, whilst at the other end of Europe in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, once the largest and Holiest church in Christendom – that building now reverberates to Muslim prayers after President Erdogan ordered it to be turned into a Mosque.

The Prayer for Today was written by St. Augustine of Hippo in the 5th century.

**Lord Jesus, my saviour,
Let me now come to you
My heart is cold:
Warm it by your selfless love.
My heart is sinful:
Cleanse it by your precious blood.
My heart is weak:
Strengthen it by your joyous spirit.
My heart is empty:
Fill it with your divine presence.
Lord Jesus, my heart is yours:
Possess it always, and only for yourself.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin