

Dear friends, Another busy Sunday with the two morning services at St. Peter's, a baptism in the afternoon at All Saints and Choral evensong at 6pm. Unfortunately, the heating in St. Peter's appears to have broken down just as the temperature starts to plummet. Hopefully we can get it back working in time for Chris Parrish's funeral at 11.30 on Friday.

**The baptism** at All Saints was lovely and Madilyn was 8 years old instead of a baby, so we had her standing on a chair leaning over the font. All went very well and the family were very attentive and appreciative.

**Next Sunday** is "Christ the King" and then on the 30th November it is Advent Sunday and we hold on that evening our traditional Advent Carol service at 6pm. The "feel" of this service is much more reflective than Christmas and is many people's favourite carol service, preferring Advent carols to Christmas ones.

### **Sunday 23rd November – Christ the King**

Robert Charles will preside at both services at St. Peter's and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively.

**Jeremiah 23: 1-6.** Shepherds were a familiar way of describing kings and rulers in the near East and depending on which Biblical translation is used, the current kings have been either negligent or have deliberately scattered the people. The language used suggests that this was written post-exile, so post 597 BC. The reading says that a God will raise up a future leader called the "Lord is our righteousness".

**Colossians 1: 11-20.** We can just luxuriate in this rather wonderful piece of writing. If we ever needed a proof text of the divinity of Jesus, this is it. Through Jesus we have touched the father and through Jesus God has reconciled all things to himself. Jesus has unique and universal validity.

**Luke 23: 33-43.** We can sometimes forget that "Christ the King" was at his crucifixion an accusation not an accolade. Jesus was setting himself up as above Caesar so was guilty a sedition, a crime punishable by death on a cross. We also read of the famous exchange with the man executed with him who asked to be remembered by Jesus when he entered heaven and Jesus famously said "This day you shall be with me in paradise".

### **Thought for the Day**

I love the derivation of words, and I find the word and concept of paradise fascinating. It is an old Persian word that meant a "walled Garden" and came to be used post-exile (597BC – 538BC) to describe the Garden of Eden and also became synonymous with "heaven" a place where there was no suffering or pain, peace and plenty and harmony were the constant.

The Greek form of the word occurs only three times in the New Testament, Luke 23:43 which is our gospel reading on Christ the king when Jesus assures the thief that this is his future (some later theologians have interpreted paradise as an intermediate holding place before the last judgement) but opinions have varied widely over the centuries.

The second place it is used is when Paul is describing his conversion experience on the road to Damascus. When describing the “third heaven” he was caught up into he describes it as paradise in 2 Corinthians 12: 4. Something or somewhere so marvellous and where he had secrets revealed to him, that changed his entire life.

The third time it is used is in the book of Revelation 2:7 where John says it is the location of the tree of life which in Genesis 2:9 is together with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden.

Whether one takes it literally or metaphorically our future destination is something to be relied upon because it falls from the lips of Jesus who is to be trusted. Sometimes religions like Christianity can be dismissed as “Pie in the sky when you die” but that would only be even half true if we didn’t also subscribe to a complex and rigorous moral and ethical religious worldview that encompasses the here and now and to which all of Jesus’ parables testify. Nonetheless, I can look forward to spending eternity in a place that is so wonderful.

**The Prayer for Today** is by Richard of Chichester

**Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ  
For all the benefits you have won for me,  
For all the pains and insults you have borne for me,  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother.  
May I know you more clearly,  
Love you more dearly  
And follow you more nearly,  
Day by day.  
Amen.**

Love and peace,

Martin