

Dear friends,

After the two services on Sunday morning and being present at the Solos lunch we had a choice of two “open gardens” events – East Budleigh and Budleigh Salterton - an embarrassment of riches. East Budleigh had a cream tea at Temple hill in support of church funds as a part of the open gardens event (which raised £331 for the church which was magnificent), but we couldn't go to both and as we were in Budleigh already we went along to Seachange (who organised the event) as Louise is a trustee so had a vested interest in seeing how that was progressed.

As a non-gardener (how did you guess?) I can only marvel at the creativity and knowledge of all the gardeners involved – knowing about pH levels, and rattling off the names of plants that mean nothing to me – but I know what I like. By far the most creative and attractive garden I came across had almost no grass (Hurrah! – as someone whose sole job in the garden is to cut grass) and was like a labyrinth of paths with gorgeous foliage. It was a wonderful surprise that it belonged to our very own Sandy, from our St. Peter's congregation.

As many of you know, Andrew, my brother -in-law, was cut down by a stroke and was given only a small chance of survival. Although disabled he has learned to walk and is going on his first ever trip away from Buxton and he is coming to us. Although a bit sceptical about belief, he knows how hard people have been praying for him, in his daughter's church, our churches and even in a Gurdwara in Chennai. He greatly appreciates this, and he is now reading the Bible, has been to his daughter's church and we will bring him to St. Peter's on Sunday

Sunday 29th June – St. Peter's commemoration.

On this, St. Peter's church's patronal festival, I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Archdeacon Trevor Jones will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11.00am respectively.

Ezekiel 3: 22-27. God will decide the time and place of a prophet prophesying. Peter came into his own after the resurrection and was the earliest focus of the church especially because of what Jesus said about him (see Matthew's gospel below). The task of explaining the significance of Pentecost was given to Peter and as a focal point he was arrested by Herod (see Acts below) and was eventually martyred in Rome and over the site of his tomb the magnificent St. Peter's Basilica now stands.

Acts 12: 1-11. An extraordinary and miraculous story of Peter's arrest and subsequent escape from prison involving the help of an angel. The effect of these kind of stories was to bolster Christians and engender the belief that no matter what befalls you in regard to your treatment by the authorities, God is with you and is working for your good.

Matthew 16: 13-19. Peter's famous profession that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah in Hebrew) at Caesarea Philippi is the source of the pivotal and foundational assertion that St. Peter is the rock on which the church will be built. The church, with Peter as it's spiritual head, will have the power on earth to decide what is right and what is wrong. Metaphorically they hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven and evil will never overcome it.

Thought for the Day

Matthew 24:6-8

“6 And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

With the immediacy and ubiquity of news nowadays, it can feel that the world is coming to an end, and for the poor people on the receiving end of an IED, drone, bomb, knife or spear it often is the end of the world for them. Without diminishing the extreme pain and trauma of anyone in a war zone, the sad fact is that it has ever been thus. The sad fact is that war and conflict are a natural result of our flawed human nature when force of arms is seen as the only course of action. “Might is right” has always been the mantra of people from way before Genghis Khan, through Hitler and Stalin to every local warlord in Africa and central America who wants to achieve what he can't get by any other means except violence.

There is a curious underlying peace and calm that comes from knowing that what is happening now in the world is not any different to what has always happened in the world. It is no worse and no better. But God is the calm, still centre of all things and can't be touched by bombs, bullets or hyperbolic rhetoric. He may well be weeping right now of course, but he has been weeping for countless generations and will continue to weep until “Thy kingdom comes”. Some warring factions will stay familiar, some will change, some will make peace and some won't. Christians will want to pray for peace of course and any advance in any peace process is to be welcomed, but Christians should also know that the chances of building heaven on earth are pretty much zero until “thy kingdom comes”. We blithely affirm that we are all sinners on a Sunday without recognizing the stark reality of that assessment of human nature. We want to stand against war and push it back and pursue the cause of peace, justice, and freedom - of course we do, but whatever progress we make will be followed by setbacks as sure as night follows day, but “Blessed are the peacemakers” nonetheless. We don't give up even when we are often so disappointed. So, in these uncertain times (we are always habitually living in uncertain times) listen to Jesus in my opening quote from Matthew. Do not be alarmed for God is in his heaven and he forgives and redeems every one of us and he prays that we have his “peace that passes all understanding” despite what is always going on in the world.

The Prayer for Today. John Donne is a deep and marvellous writer. In this prayer he focuses on what really matters in this world and to let go of the rest.

Eternal and most glorious God.

Suffer me not so to undervalue myself as to give away my soul,

Thy soul,

Thy dear and precious soul,

For nothing.

And all the world is nothing,

If the soul be given for it.

Preserve therefore my soul, O Lord,

Because it belongs to thee,

And preserve my body,

**Because it belongs to my soul.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin