

Dear friends,

Well, all three Annual General meetings are now concluded, and it is both half term and a bank holiday Monday. More importantly it is Garden waste collection day, though because of the bank holiday I assume that is now on Tuesday. I get obsessed with the weather and green waste collection dates at this time of year because during the scarecrow festival that always takes place on the second weekend in June, the front garden of our vicarage is used for the classic car exhibition, when about a dozen or so cars of all shapes and sizes drive into our garden. This means that I have to keep the grass as mown as I can and certain entrances clear of thorns and nettles – no mean feat with a garden as big as ours, and it is a constant fight against the rain as to when I can mow the lawn – and the rain this year has been persistent and heavy!

**Trinity Sunday** was long and tiring, starting with the 8am closely followed by the 10am, then the APCM, Solo's lunch and then the last in the season of musical events at St. Peter's called "Sundays at six" – the choral concert. This has been a very well attended series, making a lot of money in donations. It was an experiment to see whether the timing would work, and thanks be to God, it has worked. Thanks to everyone involved with playing and singing and special thanks to our Musical Director Stephen Tanner for organising the whole series.

### **Sunday 2nd June – 1st after Trinity (proper 4)**

I will be presiding at the 8am at St. Peter's and the 9.30 at All Saints. Canon Ken Parry will preside at St. Peter's at the 10am service and John Archibald will preside at morning prayer at St. Michael's.

**Deuteronomy 5: 12-15.** No-one knows where the Israelite idea of having every seventh day as a rest day comes from (God?) but it is their gift to the world. Its context was to prevent exploitation and while wives are not specifically mentioned (!) and the existence of slaves is pre-supposed it is remarkably all-encompassing. Note that the original reason was not Worship, but simply to rest and while ridiculous prohibitions were once put in place in certain Presbyterian enclaves in Britain, I certainly think that the 24 hour seven days a week modern way of working has gone too far the other way.

**2 Corinthians 4: 5-12.** Paul sees the glory of God in the face of the crucified Jesus. This counter-intuitive message which humanly speaking sees the cross as a mark of shame and is seen as offensive and foolish but proved very attractive to the poor and downtrodden and persecuted. The light and power of God are what Paul commends – not himself – which promotes humility amongst Christian followers. In another place Paul writes "when I am weak I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12: 10). His sufferings are also a vehicle for the gospel because he sees himself suffering for Christ's sake.

**Mark 2: 23 – 3: 6.** Silly. Nit-picking rules about what can and can't be done on the Sabbath angered Jesus. It is a classic case of the spirit of the law being crushed by the letter of the law (and is exactly the same trap many Christians have fallen into within harsh interpretations of Christianity). In order to make his case he asked a simple question. "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath?" before healing a man on the Sabbath. He also cites a case from Jewish history when David ate the bread in the Temple which was forbidden by the law but was to alleviate his hunger.

## Thought for the Day

As far as we know, resting for one day a week, is unique to the Jewish tradition. It is therefore their gift to the world which has universally taken on that idea. The idea of a Sabbath rest is taken from the creation story which has God resting also on the Sabbath day. Having one day a week when no (or less) work is done has been adopted worldwide and built into the Abrahamic faith traditions so it is Friday for Moslems, Saturday for Jews and Sundays for Christians. It reinforces that fact that God is also the Lord of time, and that rest is necessary for a human being to flourish. The original context was also to guard against exploitation and even slaves and animals were not exempt from needing a rest day. Originally the rest day was not for worship but this developed over time in all three of the Abrahamic religions. I myself like to keep Sunday – apart from leading worship as a “spiritual day”. This was drummed into me by my training vicar many years ago, who would never answer emails or get involved in any kind of church work (outside worship) on a Sunday – a rest and worship day – a practice that with obvious exceptions I try to emulate. The general societal move to see every day as exactly the same as any other with a seven day a week “open all hours” mentality I see as generally detrimental to the fabric of society and unhealthy for the individual.

## The Prayer for Today

Every now and then, we need to hear the serenity prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr. There are many versions of the prayer. The best known is I think the original short prayer and a later one used by Alcoholics Anonymous which supplements it. This is the original version.

**God, give me grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
Courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the Wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.**

Love and peace.  
Martin