

Dear friends,

The congregation was cut in half at St. Peter's on Sunday because of the torrential rain and localised flooding. The 8am communion was fine but between returning home and getting back for the 10am service the heavens opened. The East Budleigh road was blocked, so we tried Knowle which was also blocked and so finally we took the longer route through Yettington, which was also hairy driving through very deep puddles. We arrived at church at about five past ten and parked in a paddling pool that had built up behind the church. Rather than wade through it, the North door was thankfully open so we used that way in and the service commenced just a few minutes late. We also had a presentation by Aaron Stanbury who is our new CMS link mission partner who is going to Nairobi in November for three years. A very pleasant young man who is keen to keep in touch so we look forward to following his progress over the next three years.

**Of course**, the death of Christopher Briscoe on Friday affected the mood and we started the service by both composing ourselves after the difficult start and remembering Christopher and Jane at the start of the service.

## **Sunday 24th September -16th after Trinity – Proper 20**

I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively and the Reverend Colin Randall will preside at both morning services at St. Peter's.

**Jonah 3:10 – 4: 11.** Another lesson to us that God's mercy is always so much greater than our own. Jonah is like a sulking child almost willing God to destroy the people of Nineveh. From a human point of view his feelings are warranted because Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire who had destroyed Israel. God's willingness to show mercy to Israel's enemies is reminiscent of those religious people who believe that they are "saved" and everyone else is going to Hell. God has other ideas.

**Philippians 1: 21-30.** Paul is in prison and his future is uncertain and leads him to contemplate whether life or death is preferable. Death is not the end, but the fulfilment of Christian hope to be with Christ but also to remain living is also "in Christ" and for now, his vocation is more important than his desire to be with Christ. God offers his salvation to all but as Christians we have the privilege of believing the good news and therefore the duty to live according to the light we have received.

**Matthew 20: 1-16.** This parable again pitches the mercy and graciousness of God against the very human desire to see Justice done. Those who have been working in the vineyard for the longest surely deserve the most pay over the people who arrive near the end of the day, but God treats everybody in exactly the same way. The question is exactly the same to the one posed to Jonah in the Hebrew scriptures. “Are you envious because I am so generous?”

**Home Group taster session** is tomorrow on Thursday 21st September from 3pm – 4.30pm at Margaret and Peter Revell’s house - no.7, Exmouth road, Budleigh Salterton. Enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits when locations and times and frequencies will be discussed. All welcome – they will be ecumenical and will be using the book called “visions of Grace” by William Sykes, former chaplain of University college Oxford.

**The Harvest Lunch** on the 1st October at St. Peter’s at 12.15/12.30 is buffet style and tickets are £10 and a bar will also be available. Tickets available from Christine Channon or Fran.

## Thought for the Day

As a firm believer in universal salvation, the readings today are meat and drink to me because they express in parabolic fashion that God’s Grace and mercy extended to all and sundry is in my opinion “the good news” and is the reason that Christianity spread like wildfire through the world. That sense of goodness and care that God extends to all creation (not just human beings) we experience through two words – Grace and Mercy. Grace and Mercy, don’t sit well with Justice and judgement however. Those two strands have coursed through the whole of the Biblical record and compete with each other. In recent Christian history, the partialism, dualism and sense of Justice have often eclipsed the God of Grace and mercy that we see lived out through the life of Jesus Christ, which has resulted in a religion that seems vindictive and judgemental to many outsiders. Trying to convince people of the love of God whilst instilling in them a fear of Hell and damnation if they don’t follow Him was always doomed to failure and it leaves many believers confused about the true motives of God. The scandal of Grace is that its very definition means that it is completely unmerited. No-one deserves salvation, you can’t earn it, because it has just been bestowed upon us. Those who accept and believe the good news are Christians, but that doesn’t mean that someone who doesn’t accept it is left out in the cold. As St. Paul said “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

**The Prayer for the Day** is taken from a St. Francis prayer book.

**Accept my prayers dear Father,  
For those who have no one to love them enough to pray for them.  
Wherever or whoever they are, give them a share of my blessings,  
And in your love for them know that they are not forgotten.**

Love and peace,  
Martin