

Dear friends,

How do you follow the Way?

Go where you are sent.

Wait till you are shown what to do.

Do it with the whole self.

Remain until you have done what you were sent to do.

Walk away with empty hands.

How much will it cost?

The cost is everything, for all you are and all you have

Will be asked of you before the journey runs its course.

How will you know your fellow travellers?

Their faces are marked by the scars of love.

No one will tell you that the way is easy: only that it is possible.

No one can tell you if the journey is worthwhile,

For your wages are concealed in the hand of God,

And will be shown you on the last day of eternity.

But whoever chooses to follow the Way

Will have the joyous company of God's beloved fools as companions,

And a resting place, at journey's end, in the Mecca of the heart.

Before we were called Christians, followers of Jesus were known as followers of “the Way” shorthand for the way of Jesus or the way of Love. Love transcends religious, national, and racial divisions and that piece of mystical Sufi writing describes the way of Love demonstrated by Jesus Christ perfectly as well as being a template for our own life.

Sunday 11th December – Advent 3 – Advent wreath - John the Baptist (Purple)

Canon Mike Williams is presiding at both services at St. Peter's, and I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively. I will also be presiding at Choral Evensong at 6pm at St. Peter's.

Isaiah 35: 1-10. Joy and gladness shall revive and refresh our souls when we discover the Holy way of the Lord (v.9). Even the uplifting poetic masterpiece that is the book of Isaiah has stand-out highlights such as these verses that describe Salvation as an empowering possession when it lands in your heart. It instils a joy that Jesus describes as feeling like being born again from above.

James 5: 7-10. James evokes a more sober estimate of the signs of the times than the immediacy offered by Isaiah, Paul and certain gospel accounts of the end. He says the situation warrants patient waiting. Not passive waiting but with an active confidence in the promises of God.

Matthew 11: 2-11. John is in prison and perhaps understandably his faith is beginning to falter. Is this Jesus really the Christ? And he sends his supporters to ask Jesus directly. Jesus answers by quoting the prophecy of Isaiah that forms part of our lectionary today saying that he is fulfilling those prophecies by his actions. The deeper disquiet may be though that Jesus is not turning out to be the sort of Messiah that John was expecting. He was expecting a “hang ‘em and flog ‘em” Judge who brings an axe to the tree and burns every tree that doesn't bear good fruit and yet his primary activity is the restoration of the needy and giving life to the lifeless and mixing with the marginalised. John needs a new appreciation of who and what the Messiah is. However great and important John is in salvation history, even

the least person in the kingdom of God (who perceives the true nature and purposes of God) is greater than him.

Christmas Services across the RMC.

Family Carol Services at:

St Peter's Church Budleigh Salterton on 18th December at 18.00

St Michael's Otterton on 18th December at 16.00

All Saints' East Budleigh on 24th December at 18.00

Christingle Services at:

All Saints' East Budleigh on 18th December at 15.00

St Michael's Otterton on 24th December at 15.00

St Peter's Budleigh Salterton on 24th December at 17.00

Christmas Day Holy Communion Services:

Midnight Mass commencing 23.00 on 24th December at St Peter's Budleigh Salterton

St Peter's Budleigh Salterton at 8.00 & 10.00

All Saints' East Budleigh at 9.30

St Michael's Otterton at 11.00

Thought for the Day.

I think we all have our own special family traditions that we attach to Christmas – traditions, that without them it just wouldn't be the same!

Most if not all of them evoke our childhood memories of Christmases spent with family and what “we used to do”.

They give us a sense of peace and contentment, a retreat from the world's (and our) problems. I'm thinking of Christmas decorations made by children that get used every year for decades on trees that have to be just like the one we always have. I have a fairy on top of the tree that is known in my family as Joan because she is never straight on the tree so looks a bit tipsy and is named after a person from my very first parish in Margate. She sits atop a tree that I have used since my first wife Alex and daughter Claire all lived together, so evokes a bygone age. So for sentimental reasons I have to have that tree up and Louise always insists on a real tree with her equally meaningful decorations, so it is always two Christmas trees for us every year since we were married. The Queen's speech, now of course to be the King's speech we always try to catch on Christmas day. Of course, I've been ordained for twenty years now so I gave up going to family for Christmas dinner long ago as they live so far away but the joy that those memories evoke of get togethers at mum and dad's house, now both dead of course give a warm glow.

Serving the church community is part and parcel of my Christmas nowadays. I used to help prepare and serve a free Christmas day meal for the needy in Margate when I was there complete with presents for everyone. It was a busy and poor parish, but we brought the spirit of Christmas to those people as best we could. Different strokes for different folks of course, and we try and deliver the message and spirit of Christmas through our Christmas services as far as we are able. The trees and the cribs will be up very soon in our churches and that spirit of goodwill, that is palpable at Christmas I hope will seep into the hearts and minds of everyone that enters into any one of them. Let's keep the hope, joy and goodwill alive and kicking and ready to be received by any that are willing to receive it this Christmas.

The Prayer for Today

God our Father,

You send the power of the gospel into the world

As a life-giving leaven.

Fill with the Spirit of Christ

Those whom you call to live in the midst of the world

And its concerns.

Help them by their work on earth

To build up your eternal Kingdom.

Love and peace,

Martin