

Contents:

- From the Vicarage - *V. Revd Chris Hardwick*
- A Prayer for March – *Sarah Pendle*
- Tales from the Tower – *Donna Baker*
- The Mind of Christ – *Revd Mike Loader*
- Mission of the Month for March, Church Mission Society – *Ian Silcox*
- The Acts of the Apostles – *Ian Silcox*

From the Vicarage

Holy Week

Palm Sunday commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The crowd proclaim Jesus as their king for he seemed to have come as the fulfilment of his earthly mission. This is the beginning of Holy Week and it is both a day of glory and of impending tragedy. For Jesus, it is the beginning of the last week of his earthly life, a week of violent contrasts, which will end in grief and glory. The Gospels describe the sight of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey with people waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna". But soon, those palms will be formed into crosses and the cheers of the crowd will turn into jeers calling for Jesus' death. Throughout the passion, it is helpful to focus our attention on Jesus who appears as a person absorbed in prayer, as he faces each new moment of impending tragedy.

Before his resurrection Jesus has to experience pain, suffering and death on a cross. In the garden of Gethsemane, he is deeply troubled, and he sweats blood as he prays for the Father to remove the suffering from him. Betrayed and taken prisoner, he is mocked, blindfolded, beaten and spat upon, while a convicted murderer is set free. He hears Peter deny him and the apostles forsake him. His sense of abandonment is increased by the desertion of his friends. At Calvary, he is crucified between two thieves and dies as a common criminal. Mary stands at the foot of the cross with a handful of others, remaining faithful to the last.

This is the most solemn and sacred week of the Church year and during it we are invited to take the road with Mary and those few friends who followed Jesus to Calvary, and we are invited to be prayerful by his side. Holy Week highlights the peak moments of Jesus' love for us and gives us an opportunity to look at our lives as well. As we do this, and enter as best we can into Jesus' passion, the work of the cross will touch our lives so that we may be changed and come to know God more deeply. The sufferings of Jesus, and the sacrifice Jesus makes on the Cross for us, have become a source of strength to countless people throughout the ages. They can be a source of strength for us when we too face times of suffering or difficulties in our lives.

During Holy Week we are given a glimpse into the mystery of suffering and the outpouring of God's love that surrounds us on so many sides. When we are confronted with the primary Christian symbol of the cross, we are given the assurance that decisive actions have been taken for us and that there is a God of love who journeys with us.

With my love and prayers

Chris Hardwick

A Prayer for March

Eternal God and Father,
We thirst for your love,
We long for your presence,
We yearn for your peace.
Come, Lord, refresh, renew and restore us in your service
That we may live to your glory;
Through him who gives us the water of life,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Tales from the Tower

What is it about February that always finds me going through old papers, yellowing at the edges (the papers, not me – although on the other hand....), tax returns, accounts and bank statements I could have thrown out years ago, insurance certificates from firms I don't even remember and other such detritus of everyday living?

Yes, I know – it's the weather. What else is there to do on a streaming wet and windy February afternoon? (Especially in lockdown.) Even the dogs don't want to go for a walk. (I say 'even' but my dogs don't like rain even on a summer's day, let alone in winter. They bound cheerfully to the door, although they do submit with some suspicion to having their raincoats put on - you'd think there'd be a clue there, wouldn't you - but open the door and show them the weather and they're back under the sofa at a speed with which the space explorer Perseverance could have reached Mars in half the time.)

But that's beside the point. Wet February days were invented for clearing out cupboards and going through old papers, and this February has been the turn of the Tavistock Bell Ringers' archives which, as secretary, I currently hold. And they are, I may say, much more interesting than those old tax accounts and bank statements.

For instance, there is a record card of the first full peal ever rung on the bells. Surprisingly, because Tavistock was not then, nor for many more years, a method-ringing tower, this was performed on Easter Monday, April 5th 1926 and commemorated the recasting of the eight bells. The ringers were probably all from Plymouth and include William (Bill) Lavers, whom I remember from years later. It consisted, for those of you who have been following my attempts to explain method ringing, of 5040 changes of Grandsire Triples (Holt's Ten-Part, to be specific) and took three hours thirteen minutes. The residents of Tavistock must have wondered what had hit them! (*'They'm not going to be doing this every Sunday, be they?'*)

No less of an achievement was a 'long length' of 400 call changes, rung in July 1988 to mark Sir Francis Drake's defeat of the Armada four hundred years before (see what they did there?). Now, to be well rung, call changes demand just as much concentration and attention as method ringing, with very many more calls, and for the conductor who had to remember these and call each one at the right moment, this was quite a feat. It took one hour 25 minutes and whereas normally the procedure is one bell, one ringer, all the way through, it was felt that every ringer should have the opportunity of joining in with this, so although the ringing was non-stop, some of the ringers 'changed in' (or took over the ropes) during the ringing, enabling no less than thirteen to take part. And to top it all, the full course of 400 changes was composed by Jeremy Burnham the teenage son of the then tower captain, Robin Burnham (who sadly died last Christmas). It also included the famous musical changes: Queens (13572468), and Tittums (15263748).

They were a lively bunch, back in the mid-eighties. The year before their 400-change course, they enjoyed no less than three outings, and these weren't just day trips by coach, venturing over the border to Dorset or Somerset – oh no! Well, all right, one *was* to Dorset, but one saw the band crossing the sea to Ireland and another further north, to Scotland. (Were they *ever* at home, to ring for Sunday services, one can't help asking? But yes, they must have been, because they were pretty stern about service ringing and kept a register – if you didn't achieve a high enough number of attendances, you weren't considered a full member and wouldn't have a vote at the AGM. So there....)

Dated only a few years before this, I find a letter written by Sue, Robin's wife, to the Prince and Princess of Wales after the occasion of their visit to Tavistock to present West Devon Council with its borough charter. Naturally, the ringers of Tavistock, having rung for both the Prince and Princess's marriage and the birth of Prince William, were not going to let such an occasion pass without adding their own musical tribute. Sue also mentions how wet and cold Dartmoor can be, but apparently this wasn't February – wisely, the visit seems to have been arranged for March and was warm and sunny. (That makes a change.)

Lastly, although I don't have the date, a record of ringing in 44 churches in one day was broken by the same young ringer (Jeremy Burnham) who composed that long length. After months of planning, he managed to ring in 50 different churches in the Taunton area, sometimes with only four minutes between towers. (How close to each other could they have been? Why is there no list? Perhaps one could be forthcoming...?) And in case you wonder why anyone would do this, except for the human tendency to break records, this must have been sponsored because it added £500 to the Sydenham Damerel Bell Restoration Fund. (Well done, Jeremy.)

Well, that's as far as I've got for now. I hope you've enjoyed this ramble through the bone-yards of the Ringers' Archives as much as I have. Maybe I will make more discoveries for next time.

Meanwhile, the rain seems to have eased a little and the dogs need a walk, whether they know it or not. And those dreary old accounts and bank statements are still waiting to be shredded....

Donna Baker

The Mind of Christ

Rev. Mike Loader Assistant Priest.

Have you ever read a verse in scripture and thought, 'just what could that mean? And how is it possible to apply that to my life?'

Well, if you have, here is another one, what do you make of Philippians 2 verse 5? ...

What can it possibly mean to 'Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus'? It would seem to be an impossible situation to realise in this fallen world, but what did Paul think? In 1 Corinthians 2 verse 16 Paul says very clearly, 'But we have the mind of Christ'. So Paul seemed to think that it was possible, what do you think?

So let us explore how we may go about establishing the 'mind of Christ' in us as believers. Perhaps a pointer is given to us by Paul in Colossians, read chapter 3 verses 1-4. In verse 2 Paul tells us most emphatically what as Christians we are to do, it is to do what? It is to 'Set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth'. To put it another way, Pete Rowan said "Look up not down!" I do not believe that means we are to be, 'so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use', to coin an old phrase. But it does mean we are to engage in a process Paul describes in Romans 12 verses 1-2. During our Christian life, and as part of our pilgrimage towards heaven, we are to take care to what? ... 'We are not to be conformed to this world but we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds'. A real change should, and must, take over our minds if we believers are to become true disciples. So how can that 'renewal of our minds' take place? What would be your idea?

That renewal takes place through the working of God's Holy Spirit in us, and especially as we read, study and 'inwardly digest' the scriptures. You can see now why I believe it is so important for each one of us to become part of some bible study course, and why we in the Benefice offer the opportunity to join a home group.

So are we allowing that transformation to take place in the way we practice our faith in our daily lives? St Peter describes this practice in a lovely way, read 1 Peter 1 and verses 13-16. What does Peter here tell us to do? In verse 13 Peter tells us that we should, 'Therefore gird up your minds'. The way we can develop as disciples is to take a proactive part in the transformation of our minds that God wishes to accomplish in us, and that means we have to 'gird up our minds' through discipline. Not too popular a path for some of us to follow.

But was this transformation something new to the New Testament and only to be expected of us who follow the Lord Jesus today? Let us take a look at what advice King David gave to his son Solomon who was to build the Temple in Jerusalem. In 1 Chronicles 22 verse 19 David says, 'Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God'. The question for us to ask of ourselves is, 'do we set our hearts and minds to seek God who is our Lord and King'? To put it another way, are we seeking to do God's will and follow His purposes?

But even before David's time God had given clear advice to Moses how the people were expected to live out their lives, and I would suggest much of it is true for us also. In Deuteronomy 4 verses 9-10, we read, "Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart (mind) all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children".

Some translations say 'heart' and others-NRSV-say mind. It is in the mind, which we figuratively often refer to as the 'heart', where our emotions, intellect and wills actually reside. So what is God saying here to Moses? That we should not let slip from our minds the things of God, and further more that we should teach them to our children. Perhaps one of the contributors to the ills of our time is that we, and our schools, no longer teach the things of God, His laws-commandments, and His statutes, but it is those that provide the way for humankind to live and prosper as God intended.

Supremely, of course, we see the ways of God displayed in the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, who delighted to do God's will, and that was the 'mind of Christ', and as a result, it was in Jesus in whom God was 'well pleased'.

Let us also strive to do the same, and thereby bring delight to our one true and living God.

Blessings to you all, and have a very happy Easter. Revd. Mike
Based on a St Eustachius group zoom bible study of 16th February 2021.

Mission of the month for March – Church Mission Society



The Church Mission Society – formerly the Missionary-Society - was founded in 1799 by William Wilberforce MP and other Evangelical Christians. It is an inter denomination charity with initial emphases on the abolition of the slave trade, social reform at home and worldwide mission and evangelism. The society produces

a quarterly magazine 'Anvil', now only available on line at The Church Mission website.

It is our mission of the Month for March, at present led by Janet Brodley (01822- 618778); donations can be made through the parish bank account via the link on our church website (www.tavistockparishchurch.org) - or by cheque direct to Church Mission Society, Watlington Road, Oxford OX4 6BZ, phone 01865 787400.

Thank you!

Ian Silcox for Janet Brodley

The Acts of the Apostles

This New Testament book is a sequel by Luke to his gospel. It starts with the book being 'an orderly account to Theophilus', a Greek friend of Luke, followed by the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus. It starts with the ascension of Jesus witnessed by the remaining 11 disciples, before the addition of Matthias (C1: 12-26) made up the 12, corresponding to the 12 tribes of Israel, with a pronouncement by the angels of Jesus's return.

The following accounts are of particular and special importance:-

1. Peter's sermon in the temple 2: 22-24 to the Jews detailing Christ's divine authority, proven by His miracles which God performed through Him.
2. The believers' shared life 2: 43-47
3. The declaration, stoning and death of the deacon Stephen, the first Christian Martyr 7: 1-53
4. The church at Antioch 11:19-26
5. The conversion of Saul, later to be known as Paul, on the road to Damascus 9:1-24
6. Peter and the centurion Cornelius and his conversion with all of his family.
7. The baptism and giving of the Holy Spirit to the gentiles 10: 44-46

The main themes of Acts are the describing of the first years of the spreading and the persecution of Christianity; its theme is that the new faith was of no threat to Roman authority, being the true fulfilment of Judaism and that the Roman/gentile world should see and experience it as such. Luke, the author of Acts, brings out clearly that the gospel of Christ was, and still is today, the power to change people through the Holy Spirit, and to turn the 'world upside down'. A message surely for 'ordinary men and women' today in these difficult times of the Covid pandemic, conflict in and between nations and global warming.

With my Lenten thoughts, study and prayers
sincerely Ian Silcox
