

Virtual Church News

Sunday 15 November

2nd Sunday Before Advent

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

A Reading for the Week

Matthew 25:14-30

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'



Services in Church

There will be no services in our churches during November. We hope to resume our 9.30am Sunday services as follows:

- Sundays 6, 20 Dec - All Saints
- Sundays 13, 27 Dec - St James

"So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

These times feel apocalyptic, like the religious nuts who proclaim 'the end is nigh' do appear to have some credence to their claim. I doubt very much that the end is actually near but the Trump/Johnson era, overshadowed by the cloud of global pandemic, does create an air of menace like the given aspects of our comfortable Western bubble are no longer the bedrock of security. Perhaps the end is actually nigh. Greta Thunberg, no longer of a camp driven by religion, certainly seems to be one of the modern prophets of doom and, like many, she speaks with the firm backing of science, oblivious to the sound of any inner voice. Her question to the leaders of the nations and to ourselves is 'what have you given to the world?' That lies at the heart of prophetic enquiry.

The Church of England, on the other hand, seem to be utterly compliant with the fashionable voices of moderation. No prophetic predictions here, yet still the wacky mission plans and evangelistic gimmicks designed to fill the ancient empty pews are all directed with at least one eye on the corporate bank balance. The saddest places are those who, instead, do nothing but encourage us, with our ageing torsos, to stand, Samson-like to hold up the walls of our equally ancient buildings.

Continued on next page

Message from Rev Eric Lomax continued

One day collective arthritis will force us to retreat and finally our walls will collapse. The end, therefore, is really nigh because so much of what we do is designed to preserve, but little of it is instigated for the purpose of love.

What should be central to our mission is not the recitation of fluffy religious narrative but the passion of Christ. Our core message should be that the Gospel is something to live for and, indeed, something to die for. It is not the passive preservation of our resources, nor the innocuous gimmicks of popularist religious ideology but an active, penetrative faith in the world that seeks to transform our society with the costly love of Christ.

Reading our Bible passage today is a story filled with apocalypse. Working for the Lord is a serious business that demands commitment and passion. Matthew 25 gives us the parable known as the Parable of the Talents. Three slaves (in classic narrative style) are entrusted with talents. One has five, one has two, and the other has one. Talents, are not, as we understand, skills, rather bags of treasure. The two with the most invest their master's treasure so that it produces more treasure and the slave with the least buries his treasure to keep it safe. Two engage the talents through activity and the one inter his talent in meaningless inactivity

At the end of the day, the owner returns and commends the active slaves for putting the talents to work. He does not, however, commend the other slave, but rather condemns him for doing nothing; 'You wicked and lazy slave,' he says, 'For what purpose did I entrust you with this treasure?'

The story tells us that the master has entrusted his slaves with all of his wealth and not just a proportion of it, the implication being that we have been entrusted with the most precious gifts that our Father has to give.

We have been called to be Christ in the world, to be active disciples who invest the precious love our Father in world, where that love is clearly a rare commodity. This investment requires sacrificial activity rather than inactive passivity. His simple command, as we saw last week, was to 'love one another (your neighbour) as I have loved you.' (John 15). The word is Agape (ἀγάπη), a sacrificial, self-giving love which Jesus then reinforced with the further language of sacrifice; μείζονα ἀγάπην ἔχει οὐδεὶς ταύτης τις θῆ ψυχὴν φίλων (just thought I would throw that in). It means 'Greater love has no one (than) this that one (would) place down his soul for his companions.'

You will recognise the word ψυχὴν as 'Psyche,' which is translated as soul, the deepest life breath of any human being. The Greek letter 'ψ' (ps) is the symbol for psychology, and Aristotle designated the word 'ψυχὴν' to the butterfly. Our call to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others is the

call to give our deepest selves for one another.

That is the talent we have all been given, to place our most precious inner treasure at the feet of our brothers and sisters.

In this story the one who has buried his talent has nothing to present before his master than lame excuses. We are called to activate this talent for the sake of others and to bury or simply preserve it is a waste of what he has given to us. We are called to love proactively in the world and that love is dynamic, passionate and, in terms of the saving grace of God, it is ultimately profitable.

God bless, Eric

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044**
Available 24 hours a day.



Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings at 8pm. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Shine a light of hope!



Christingle Celebration

4pm Christmas Eve (via Zoom)

Email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com, call/text 0778 6886 710 or message us on Social Media and we will deliver your Christingle to you.

Join us for our Christingle Celebration when we will make our Christingles and celebrate the light of Jesus together, or make them in your own time.

St James's Church, Biddenham
All Saints Church, Kempston
Raising funds for The Children's Society

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Aled Jones's Faith Journey.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Ely Cathedral.

Wednesday 18 November:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Chichester Cathedral.

Delivery of Parish Christmas Cards

Can you help?

St James's Church is hoping (subject to lockdown restrictions) to deliver its usual parish Christmas Cards in early December - but we need your help!

Could you deliver cards to the houses in your street/neighbouring streets?

If you are able to help, please text 0778 6886 710 or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com.

Thank you



Christmas

with **St James's and All Saints Churches**

Sunday 20 December

4.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve

4.00pm Christingle

11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

10.30am Family Service

All services will be held via Zoom

To join, just go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039

Unfortunately we will not be able to hold our usual events and services in church this year

Hymns/Songs of the Week

Immortal Invisible

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfu1dqKCGd8>

Meekness & Majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXggFYQQTJ0>

God be in my Head (Wilby)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NkavyhiLxo>

I will offer up my life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mHbh1HvrEA>

For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week we are looking at the same reading as the grown ups. It is set out on the front page. It is quite a long reading, so why not try to read through it and act it out with and dolls/figures you might have - you will need one to be the master and three others to be the slaves. The story is about Jesus trusting us to 'look after' his work. To do that we sometimes need to take risks.

Activities

If you were given a pound coin and told to go away and try to grow it into a bigger amount of money, what do you think you could do. Write down your ideas.

Spend a few moments imagining what you think God might be like. Draw or paint a picture of something which you think represents what you imagine God to be like.

Song

Take it to the Limit by Danny Gokey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3Q6BzZKRag>

Prayer

Lord, we pray for courage when you call on us to do something for you. It can be risky and worrying. We think we might fail and anger you. Help us to understand that you will be pleased if we try our best. Amen.

(resources from BRF/Messy Remembrance)

Virtch

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Please pray with me

God our Father,
we thank you for the love you have
shown to us.
Help us to be disciples of Christ,
responding to your love,
by showing love to others,
through Jesus Christ, the King of Love.
Amen.



Month of Prayer for the Nation

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York invite you to participate in a month of prayer as the second lockdown in England comes into force.

The Archbishop of York says "*At this challenging time when all of us are fearful and anxious, and when so many are suffering, [prayer] is the one thing we can all do... Let's pray together at this difficult time.*"

Daily prayer themes are as follows:

- Sundays: Family, friends and loved ones.
- Mondays: Schools, colleges, children and young people.
- Tuesdays: Elderly, isolated and vulnerable.
- Wednesdays: Businesses, the workplace and economic wellbeing.
- Thursdays: NHS and other key workers.
- Fridays: National and local Government.
- Saturdays: The grieving and those suffering with ill-health (physical and mental).

To find out more, go to [churchofengland.org/PrayerForTheNation](https://www.churchofengland.org/PrayerForTheNation)

ST JAMES'S CHURCH



Biddenham Tea Towels
Mugs/Coasters
Jotters

Contact Jane: 359014

Village Christmas Cards
Marmalade/Jam
Jelly/Chutney

Contact Sue: 342373

Christmas Handicrafts
Contact Trissa: 950612

Also on Sale Outside St James's Church
after Sunday Services (approx. 10.15am)

There will be no Christmas Bazaar this year

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.

Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever. Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets.



Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695