

Dear all

DON'T FORGET THE CLOCKS GO FORWARD TONIGHT. Otherwise, if you are able to attend church tomorrow, you might find you arrive just as we are finishing!

Our sixth session of the **Lent Course** discussed finding echoes of the story of Jesus in our world today.

The gospel is the greatest gift we can offer, but we need to be thoughtful in how we offer it. How might we best connect God's story to the person?

Hannah Steele looks at the account of Paul in Athens. He is distressed at Athens – a city bursting with idols. Paul presents the gospel:

1. By looking and listening. e.g. note what is current. What can they say about the gospel and about God?
2. Giving credit where credit is due. Acts 17²² – “I can see how extremely religious you are in every way”. Paul positions himself as a fellow seeker. He picks up on clues to the existence of God e.g. beauty of creation, desire for hope etc. This becomes a stepping-stone to conversation.
3. Looking from a different angle. Paul acknowledges their search for God, notes their inscription to an unknown God, and expands on it. Paul's approach is both affirming and confrontational. See also Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman. Both accounts build on a foundation that is already there, but go far beyond it.
4. Pointing to Christ. Paul points out they been looking in the wrong place. It can be too easy never to get around to talking about Jesus. You don't need to say everything about him, Paul simply points to his uniqueness.

The gospel addresses 4 important points –

1. Who are we? What does it mean to be human? What is the purpose of life?
2. What is wrong? How do we account for sin, evil and injustice in the world and in ourselves?
3. What is the solution? What is God done about it? NB the Bible uses a variety of images.
4. What's the future? Where is human life heading? Is there life after death?

The chances are that, if we get into a serious conversation with someone, one or more of these will come up. We should be looking for the questions. For most people Christianity is not flawed, but irrelevant. In Athens Paul sought to connect the good news of Jesus with the world around him - he engaged in imaginative evangelism. He sought to build bridges between their experience and his claims about Jesus. Our task as witnesses is to look for those in everyday life, and draw attention to them.

Paul received three kinds of response:

1. Those who mocked.
2. those who wanted to hear more on another day.
3. Those who decided to follow Jesus.

There will always be those who mock. We must be prepared. Our invitation can be accepted or rejected! But we still need to be faithful to speak out the good news.

A reminder that the final session of the Lent Course will take place on Zoom, Thursday 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVU44RzJxTFFHbTY1Mnl0bjZzOz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

I'd like to share a poem by a former colleague of mine. Chris Rickards taught English and Drama at the school I first taught at. She sang at mine and Helen's wedding.

PRIMROSE

The primrose is neither prim
Nor is it a rose.
Primroses are not buttoned up
Not stiff and formal
Not stuck with noses in the air
Nor do they affect grandeur.

Like Shakespeare's rose
They do smell sweet
But, oh, such a delicate perfume -
The aroma of Spring!
Nothing showy or blousey
About a primrose
Whose pale yellow quartz flower
Stretches on its neck
Reaching up beyond its
Bed of peridot leaves.

Primroses!
Bringers of hope.
Hope for warmer days
Hope for growth after Winter's sleep
Hope, hope...

What, then, is a suitable name?
Not prim
Not a rose
A harbinger of life's diurnal round.
The Eternal Hope flower.

The Christian singer/songwriter Don Francisco has shared this re-imagination of the **Lord's Prayer** on his Facebook page. What do you think?

"My Dad and my Mom-- my Creator,
My Brother, my Sister, my Lover, my Friend:
May you be known, loved, and exalted.
May everything on this planet yield joyfully
To the pulse and flow of your Spirit,
Just as everything does in the spiritual dimension,
In your very presence.
Thank you for your constant care and provision,
For all that we need in our bodies, minds, souls, and spirits.
May your Spirit of love and forgiveness flow through my being,
Washing away all criticism, judgment, guilt and condemnation.

May it flow out from me the same way.
Guide us in paths around the spheres of influence
Of those who are committed to evil,
And when we do become ensnared and imprisoned,
Have mercy on our ignorance, wilfulness, blindness and deafness,
And deliver us.
For you are eternal Love, and we are your children."

Service details for this coming Sunday, Palm Sunday.

Readings – Mark 11: 1-11 (Palm Gospel); Isaiah 50: 4-9a; Philippians 2: 5-11; Psalm 118: 1-2, 24; Mark 14: 1 – 15: end (Passion Reading).

Today's musical offerings (apologies for adverts – it's how they are able to make content free!):

Firstly, the Psalm for this Sunday, Anglican chant.

[\(1\) Psalm 118: O Give Thanks Unto The Lord, For He Is Gracious - YouTube](#)

And, for total contrast...

In Hebrew

[\(1\) Psalm 118 sung in Hebrew - תהלים קיח-אודף \[NEW HALLEL TUNE\] - YouTube](#)

Anthems recommended for today include:

Lift up your heads - Handel

[\(1\) Messiah: Part 2, Lift up your heads, O ye gates \(Chorus\) - YouTube](#)

Lift up your heads – Matthias

[\(1\) Lift up your heads O ye gates - YouTube](#)

Hosanna to the son of David – Weelkes

[\(1\) Weelkes: Hosanna To The Son Of David - YouTube](#)

Hosanna to the son of David – Gibbons

[\(1\) Hosanna to the Son of David – Gibbons - YouTube](#)

For a longer listen:

St Mark Passion – Charles Wood

[\(1\) Wood St. Mark Passion.wmv - YouTube](#)

There is no extant manuscript for a Bach St Mark Passion, however Dr. Simon Heighes has reconstructed one. I'm afraid it's in German, but the music is beautiful!

[\(1\) Markus Passion, BWV 247. Johann Sebastian Bach \(1685 - 1750\) - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark