

Morning Service 30th August

Thank you for joining us for this morning service on this last Sunday of August – I'm sorry that due to unforeseen circumstances our return to worship in church has been delayed a week, but once we're back we'll be live streaming those services too. I'm Rev John Musson, vicar of Cudham and Downe and I'm joined by Helen Musson, Ordinand at St Augustines college just about to begin her final year before ordination.

You'll find the words of the service on the church website pcd.org.uk

The Greeting

Today we focus on Jesus' words 'take up your cross' and what that might mean.

God calls us to worship in spirit and in truth,
with both deep sadness and indescribable hope,
as we reflect on all that Jesus went through for us,
and praise God who goes beyond all expectations.

Amen.

Our Opening Hymn is Father, hear the prayer we offer

- 1** **Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.**

- 2** **Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.**

- 3** **Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.**

- 4** **Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.**

Opening Prayer

Thank you, Lord,
that you do not call us to anything
without also giving us the resources to cope.
You do not ask us to go anywhere you haven't been.

You call us to take up our cross,
and we come to you with fear and trembling,
but knowing that ultimately your way is the best.
Be with us, Lord, and help us to understand.
Amen.

We now spend time reflecting on our need to say sorry and to hear God forgive us.
Let us pray

Lord, I acknowledge before you
that often I can be like Peter:
hearing your word but going off on my own track,
not wanting to see your path, especially if it looks rough.
**Forgive me, Lord,
and set me on your path.**

Lord, I acknowledge before you
that there are times when I want the world,
but don't give much thought to my soul.
**Forgive me, Lord,
and help me to take up my cross.**

Lord, I acknowledge before you
that there are times when
I am a stumbling block to others – and to myself;
times when I look for complications
instead of just following you.
**Forgive me, Lord,
And help me to follow you. Amen.**

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for Today – 12th Sunday after Trinity

God of constant mercy, who sent your Son to save us:
remind us of your goodness, increase your grace within us,
that our thankfulness may grow, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Reading *Matthew 16.21-28 (NIV)*

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

Talk

How things can change in only a few days. One day we were enjoying our holiday, the next unable to return to the UK without 14 days of quarantine – which is why we're back here in the Vicarage again for today's service.

I hope over the last few weeks you've enjoyed the Church Society preachers, and how last week Wallace Benn reminded us about Peter the rock. Yet here we are only a few verses on in Matthew's gospel and now the rock begins to crumble and changes into a stumbling block that might thwart God's mission. Maybe Peter had got ahead of himself, thinking that Jesus' commission meant he could now tell Jesus what to do – there is always that temptation in our prayer lives – trying to convince God we know better than he does – instead of listening to his voice and letting him guide us.

So in the security of Caesarea Philippi Peter gets it right – you are the Christ, the son of the Living God – as Jesus now heads towards Jerusalem and prepares to show what being Christ will mean, Peter gets it very wrong, wrong enough, Jesus says in typical rabbinic rhetorical style, that he's got it so wrong he's in league with the devil!

It seems that at this point Jesus remembered an event at the start of his ministry – when he was alone in the desert and the devil sought to persuade him to take an easy course, to build an earthly kingdom, instead of walking the way of the cross, and Peter's words seemed all too familiar – take the easy way, rather than the cross shaped costly way. That's a constant temptation for all of us who follow Jesus.

For Jesus, it really did mean a change of direction, and after Peter's declaration of faith which was the focus of last week's reading, Jesus could now begin both the journey and the explanation of that journey to those who would choose to follow him towards the cross. It is in the cross of Jesus that God sets us free – Jesus dying for us brings us life – a costly life, but life in all its fulness. Have a look at the words of the bible reading again – take up your cross and follow him. Giving our lives to Jesus means we find life with him. It means giving up self, counting the cost and taking a decision to follow. Then we will find out what life is all about.

As St Paul sums up in Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This is the life we as Christians are called to live – a life with Christ through his Holy Spirit living in us. This is taking up our cross and following Jesus – living by faith in the Son of God – Jesus who loved me so much that he gave up his life on the cross – all I can do is to say thank you, and to live the life he calls me to live.

As we begin a new 'term' and resume worship in our church buildings, though you are welcome to continuing worshipping with us online, I invite you to make this prayer of commitment your own...

Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life...

Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross for me, so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit.

I now receive that gift.

Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.

Thank you Lord Jesus, Amen.

If you've prayed that prayer for the first time today, please let me know so we can help you grow in your Christian journey.

Please join us for homegroup on Wednesday at 8pm via zoom as we look again at this passage - Meeting ID: 818 0587 7250 Passcode: 364312 John will be sending out notes soon, please ask if you'd like a copy.

The Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Let us pray. The response to 'merciful God' is '**Hear our prayer**'

Lord God,
you reproached Peter because he had only human concerns;
We pray for people the world over
who find themselves in difficult situations.

We pray that they would all have someone
to care for them and lift them before you.
Merciful God,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are persecuted for their faith:
for all who are misunderstood,
for asylum seekers who flee real danger in their homeland.
We pray for those who work tirelessly to address wrongs.
Merciful God,
hear our prayer.

We pray for people whose lives don't always work out right,
through their fault, or through no fault of their own.
Merciful God,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the people in our lives
who need your protection, Lord,
that we will always be faithful in prayer for them.
**Merciful God,
hear our prayer. Amen.**

After a moment to bring our own prayers to God:
Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
so in faith and trust we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

As we come to the end of our service today, a final prayer we can share
**Lord God, you knew what was going to happen to you.
You didn't flinch, or back away.
You calmly told the disciples – and us – what to expect.
As we go out now, remind us constantly to look to you in the good and the tough times.
Guide us as we go in your name. Amen.**

*Thank you for joining us in worship today. Details of our next services are found on our facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/PCDChurches/> where you can watch the service live or catch up later, and
you'll find this week's notice sheet and other useful information on the church website pcd.org.uk*

*Please also contact the Vicar, Rev John Musson if you need any help or just for a chat! vicar@pcd.org.uk
01959540012*

Our closing song is Brother, Sister, let me serve you...

- 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too.**
- 2 We are pilgrims on a journey,**

and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

3 I will hold the Christlight for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

4 I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

5 When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

6 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too.

Blessing

It may be good,
it may be tough,
but know that God is with you
and his love is enough.
And so may the blessing of God rest upon you;
The Blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.