



St John's, Stoneleigh Weekly Newsletter

Sunday 28th June

Collect

God our saviour, look on this wounded world in pity and in power; hold us fast to your promises of peace won for us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

A MESSAGE FROM REV. KEN HOBBS

From July 1st the side chapel will be available for private prayer. More details are in this newsletter and my thanks go to the church wardens for all their help in preparing this. Please do follow their guidance and make use of this sacred space to quietly pray.

We heard this week that churches can reopen from July 4th. At the time of writing we have no information or guidance from the Diocese as to how this will be implemented but all local churches will be able to make their own arrangements. Our Zoom services will continue for the time being. We will let you know as soon as possible when and how we can resume a regular Sunday service.

In the mean time I wish you and your families God's blessing and a safe enjoyment of a less restricted life style.

Ken

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Don't forget you can keep in touch by joining the WhatsApp group, visiting our website and following us on Facebook. All your contributions to these groups during this time provide great encouragement to us all. For details of the website and where to find us on Facebook, please see the bottom of this page. To join the WhatsApp group, you will need a smartphone and to have installed WhatsApp. Please contact the office if you have any questions.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

KEEPING IN TOUCH AND PRAYERS

Please don't forget to call if you need some help during this time or if you would like to add something to the prayer board.

Jean Tutton 020 8393 3687

SUNDAY SERVICES

Don't forget you can join us live on Sunday at 10am using this link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86852818063>

For those of you who do not have access to the internet you can now join our Sunday Worship by phone.

Dial this phone number: 0203 051 2874

You will be asked to enter the meeting ID followed by # (hash).

Key in: 868 5281 8063#

You will be asked for a personal ID, just press # again and you will be connected to the Service.

If you want help with this speak to John Simon (phone 0775 187 4807).

John Simon

THURSDAY COFFEE MORNING

Each Thursday, St John's will be hosting a coffee morning via Zoom. Please join us at 10:30am using this link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83134817320>

The link will be the same each week.

Rev. Ken Hobbs

DAILY HOPE

There is a free phone line 0800 804 8044, for hymns, reflections and prayers, provided by Guildford diocese, especially for people without access to the internet. It is called Daily Hope.

Janis Forder

OPENING OF CHURCH

We are pleased to be able to say that it has been agreed with effect from 1st July, the Side Chapel will be open for private prayer during the week between the hours of 10am and 3pm. There will be strict measures in place to ensure St John's is a safe place to visit and all those making use of the Side Chapel should adhere to the following:

- Do not go into the main church area.
- Use the hand sanitiser on the wall when entering by the glass doors.
- Ensure no more than 6 people are in the chapel at any one time and observe the 1 metre social distancing rule at all times.
- Bibles and all papers have been removed to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
- Bring and use your own bibles if you wish.
- When leaving please use the provided wipes provided on the table at the entrance to clean anything you may have touched, including your seat and the door handles on the glass front doors.

Please do not enter the Parish Centre, this will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

Janis Forder and Ken Mussell

KEYS

We are missing a key for the Book of Remembrance cabinet. If you have used the key, can you please return it to the key cupboard in the vestry. Many thanks.

Janis Forder

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FOODBANK

Thank you for your continued support of the Foodbank. They have limited storage space and are currently overstocked with the following items and have no room to store them this time - baby wipes, porridge, tinned soup, long life milk, pasta sauces and pulses. However, there is no doubt that they will be asking for these items in another month or so. Meanwhile they do need the following items please - Tinned potatoes, Custard, Fruit squash, Tins of pasta/beans with sausages, Packets of dried pasta in sauce, Washing up liquid, Noodles, Sugar - small bags if possible, Shaving Gel/foam, Bar soap, Cereal, Cooking sauces, Tinned fruit, Packet soup, Powdered milk, Chocolate/treats, Hair conditioner, Microwave rice, Long life fruit juice, Peanut butter.

Please continue to donate food in the supermarket collect boxes; monetary gifts can be made via the website <https://epsomewell.foodbank.org.uk> and cash, in an envelope please, can be put through my door at 59 Highfield Drive and I will forward it. Thank you

Polly Elder

Epsom Vineyard Church are running a CAP Money Course which is starting online on Tuesday 30 June. It is open to anyone living in the Borough who feels they'd like some support on their finances, both within other church communities and people not connected with them. It is likely that a lot of people are struggling financially, more than usual, due to C-19 / furlough / job losses and this will be a great resource to help them.

Signup and a little more info (including a video from Justin Welby) can be found on Epsom Vineyard's website - <https://www.epsomvineyard.org/cap>

Worship at Home

“O Lord our God, your greatness is seen in all the world. Your praise reaches up to the heavens” (Ps 8.1)

We have come to worship God our heavenly Father; to recognise his power and authority; to give thanks for his care and keeping and to offer ourselves in the service of Christ.

Hymn O for a Thousand tongues to sing

Collect

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Confession

O Lord our Heavenly Father, we confess that we have sinned against you and done many things to grieve you. We have often been selfish and unforgiving. We have forgotten to pray to you and we have not loved you as we should. For these and the other things we have done

wrong we ask for your forgiveness and we pray that you will cleanse and renew us and strengthen us in the days ahead. Help us to walk in the light of your presence. Amen

1st Reading Genesis 1. 26-31 read by Tim Rogers

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind² in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,³ and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind² in his image, in the image of God he created them;³ male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Song from Sarah

2nd Reading Ephesians 5. 22-33 read by Tim Rogers

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body.² ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Reflection

Introduction

There are a number of interconnected themes in Genesis 1-11. The 2nd in our series is “Gender”- the elephant in the room or to change the metaphor, a basket of hot potatoes!

The author and preacher John Stott said of this and other difficult issues **“Conscientious disciples of Jesus know that Christian action is impossible without Christian thought”** At Sunday school they were learning about how God created everything including human beings. Little Charles seemed

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especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as if he were ill and said "what is the matter?" He replied solemnly "I have a pain in my side and I think I'm going to have a wife!"

We live in an increasingly complex and complicated world as far as sexuality, relationships and roles are concerned. There are changing perceptions of marriage; cohabitation is common place; the gay issue and debate; we have feminism; we have changes in styles of dressing, we have the changing roles of men and women in the home, workplace, politics and society; we have a multicultural society with different views on the status of men and women; We have had successive legislation promoting equal pay and outlawing sex discrimination. We have transsexuals and bisexuals; sex changes and gender reassignment! We have civil partnerships and gay "marriage". Life is a gender minefield! The "Gender Agenda" is increasingly tortuous. Germain Greer as long ago as 1970 in her book "the Female Eunuch" stated that women were oppressed-their identity was defined by men in a demeaning way. It would however be a mistake to regard feminism as a largely non-Christian movement. Dr Elaine Storkey (Thought for the Day-President of Tear Fund etc) in her book The Rise of Feminism argues for a Biblically rethink about the roles of men and women and their place in society.

There was an article in Christianity Magazine entitled **Men in the Church**, which addresses, among others, the issue of why the church is full of women,

"We are in a time of gender confusion in both church and society. Men need to rediscover their masculinity. Having redefined masculinity into something more safe, sensitive, manageable and well feminine, it berates men for not being men. How can a man know he is one when his highest aim is minding his manners? Men need permission to live from their heart; to get in touch with their God given masculine desires for a battle to fight, adventure to live and a beauty to rescue. The core of a man's heart is undomesticated and deep within the soul of every man is a deeply spiritual longing for adventure that must find release!"

The Classic book by Dr John Gray is "Men are from Mars. Women are from Venus". He states that the differences between men and women are so profound that they might as well have come from different planets!

- **eg Martians (men) value power and achievement. Venusians (women) value love and relationships.**
- **eg Martians go to their caves to solve their problems alone. Venusians get together and talk about their problems"**
- **Eg "when a woman is hurting she wants empathy but he thinks she wants solutions"**

It is not a Christian book but at its very least it urges us to remember that we are supposed to be different! What are we to make of all this stuff? Let's take a look at just one issue that has its Biblical origin in Genesis and which in my view pervades the whole of the Biblical narrative.

It is a biblical Perspective on Equality Men and women are equal in the sight of God and here are four Biblical reasons why!

(a) Equality is based on Creation

This is based primarily on the account in Genesis 1

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1.27) The image bearers of God are male and female with a shared responsibility to be trustees of the earth.

Since both of us are made in God's image there will be elements of the masculine and the feminine in God's personality and character. We need to see that although there is cultural male bias in how God is described in Scripture he is ascribed feminine characteristics.

For example in the song of Moses God is described as the "rock who fathered you" and the "God who gave you birth"- (Deut 32.18) Israel's God is both Father and Mother. There are other refs to gathering one's chicks under one's wings; or comforting a child at the breast....

We do not need to produce non-sexist or androgynous language to describe God but we do well to give weight to those passages that address another side of God's character which is complimentary to his Fatherhood. When we refer to God as "He" and the Holy Spirit as "He" we are making a statement, not of gender, but of personhood.

(b) Equality is distorted by the Fall

More on this in a later talk on evil but here are a few comments at this stage. The fall produces alienation-between God and mankind; within mankind and between mankind and the environment.

One example of this fall out is the way that men have subjugated women in ways that God never intended.

Here are four cultural examples

- (a) Ghandi "A Hindu husband regards himself as lord and master of his wife who must ever dance attendance before him"
- (b) Koran Sura 4. "Men have authority over women because Allah has made one superior to the other"
- (c) Western Pornography- a symbol of our decadence where women are objects of male voyeurism, abuse and even violence. "The playmate becomes a plaything" The all pervasive power of the internet is everywhere. With respect to our children we may be remembered sadly as the society that presided over the destruction of innocence.
- (d) In the Genesis account one of the effects of the Fall is that speaking to Eve we read "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you"(Gen 3.16)

BUT in the OT marriage is praised; based on God's covenant love for Israel; the beauty of sexual love is celebrated; the capabilities of a good wife are extolled; godly and enterprising OT women are commended and it is constantly emphasised that widows should be cared for. It looks forward to a day when God's spirit would be poured out on ALL flesh (men, women, sons and daughters)

(c) Equality is affirmed by Jesus

When Jesus came he was born of a woman. Although we are anxious to avoid the exaggerated veneration of the virgin Mary we should avoid the opposite extreme of failing to honour her. Jesus ministry was accompanied by women-they travelled with him and served with him. Jesus enjoyed the company of women- Martha and Mary. Jesus ministered directly to women in a way that drove a coach and horses through the cultural norms of their day-eg women at the well; the woman taken in adultery etc

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Women were the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection and their testimony was accepted (despite the Jewish rule that evidence from a woman was inadmissible in court)

"Without any fuss or publicity Jesus terminated the curse of the fall, reinvested woman with her partially lost nobility and reclaimed for his new kingdom community, the original creation blessing of sexual equality." John Stott

(d) Equality is celebrated in the New Testament

Paul states in Gal 3.28- There is neither male or female....you are all one in Christ Jesus. Romans 16 contains a list of commended ministers and workers including 8 women!

The role of homes and hospitality in Christian life and work is affirmed in Acts – the husband and wife team of Priscilla and Aquila is one example.

Conclusion

(a) What the Gospel is not about- it is not about being Unisex!

(b) But it is about equality and with that equality comes, in my view

two other fundamental principles

1.The principle of complementarity (men and women physically and emotionally compliment each other)- from the beginning it is male and female This is more evident from the second account of creation in Genesis 2.

2.The principle of co responsibility- in the world, in the family and in the church!

The famous commentator Matthew Henry, speaking of the creation of Eve, put it this way

"God did not make woman out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be loved"

Peter speaking of husband and wife says that they are "Heirs together of the grace of God" The New Testament view of gender relationships was a radical challenge to the lack of equality in the first century. For example wherever the Christian Gospel has been preached in the world it has raised the status of women!

As the French put it and the Bible also "Vive la Difference!"

Hymn "Father we love you we worship and adore you"

Prayers - Joan Simon

Almighty God, we thank you for your mercy and your grace: Thank you for the wonder of your presence and power in Creation. You are our light in darkness, our strength in weakness and our comfort in sorrow. You heal our bodies and our minds; you ease our pain, you lift our anxieties; you give us hope and you set us free.

So fill us with your Spirit's power that we may take your healing love to a world in need, with your strength rebuild broken lives, and bring glory to your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come, your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

For the Kingdom, power and the glory are yours, no and for ever Amen

Hymn Broken for me broken for you

Peace

Thanksgiving Prayer

The Lord is here

His spirit is with us,

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give thanks and praise.

On the night when He was betrayed, at supper with his friends, Jesus took bread and thanked you. He broke it and gave it to them saying "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

At the end of supper, taking a cup of wine, Jesus thanked you and said "Drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this in remembrance of me."

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory, send your Holy Spirit that the bread and wine we share may be for us by faith the body and blood of your dear son

(do share some bread and wine if you feel that is appropriate)

Hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness"

Blessing

Book of Remembrance: Frederick Sydney Hooper, Bill Porter, Doreen Edith Martin, Alastair James Duthie, Louisa Esther Johnson, Ian Hubert Duthie, Lawrence Alfred Collins, Alexander Henry Francis Morris, Ellen Tripcony, Nancy Marion Allen, Matthew James Clement Gardiner

From our Prayer Board: Rene Grace

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