

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Second Sunday after Epiphany - 17th January 2021

Collect:

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 139.1-10

1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
3 You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.
5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.
7 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I



flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

A reading from the second book of Samuel (3.1-10)

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (1.43-end)

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

As you all know, I live in Ipswich. But there are plenty of people across the county as well as further afield who think I live in Bury, next to – or even in! – the cathedral. But when I explain I live here I usually get some sort of expression of pity or sympathy which I find puzzling, even annoying, particularly when it comes from people in Suffolk!

Most of you have lived here far, far longer than I have and may have encountered something similar, with people simply not knowing how good it is to live here, and having some sort of grim impression of the place. I know we have our problems and challenges, but I and my family really like living here. And when I'm challenged on it, I'll talk about the people – mostly the people – and then the places that I'd love to show those who take a dim view – the parks, the historic town centre, the waterfront, and the great array of local neighbourhoods and so on. Come and see, I'd say – or used to say when that was possible – and I'll show you.

Which means of course that we have some sympathy with the good people of Nazareth. Philip, in our gospel story this morning, reveals to Nathanael that he has found the one predicted in their Jewish Scriptures, and he comes from Nazareth, to which Nathanael retorts, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" You can imagine some of the responses from people from some of our neighbouring towns and villages if we said we have found the messiah and he comes from Ipswich.

Now Nathanael came from Cana – we learn that at the end of John's Gospel when he reappears as one of the disciples on the Sea of Tiberius after Jesus' resurrection. Cana was where Jesus' miracle of water into wine happened, and we rather get the impression it was a place that thought well of itself. Cana is about 4 miles from Nazareth, so we might think of equivalents around Ipswich! But what did Philip do when Nathanael responded in such a dismissive way? He didn't get into a debate. He didn't start telling Philip about all the wonderful things to do and see in Nazareth. He didn't even talk about Jesus. He certainly didn't walk off in a huff. He just said "come and see."

That's rather harder to argue with, unless you really aren't interested. Having something to see is the evidence we most value, we most rely on. We trust what we see. So, come and see, says Philip. And of course, we know that is the right thing to do because it is the sort of thing we say when we want to convince people about Ipswich. Come and see.

But this story is not about a place, it is about a person, and about believing in a person. So when people say the equivalent of "can anything good come out of Nazareth" to us, like, "can anything good come out of church" or "out of being a Christian" or "out of believing in God" we can spend time arguing, but what will really make a difference is to say, "come and see." And when we say, "come and see" what will we want to show them? People, of course, the people who also live lives close to Jesus, who live lives of faith. We'll show them each other, and what a difference our faith makes, sustaining, inspiring and transforming our lives. We'll show them our worship, this strange thing we do where we focus everything on what it means to be in God's presence and, most of the time have God at the centre. We'll show them what we do in our community, and living to care for others is what makes life really worthwhile. And we can do all that because someone said "come and see" to us first. In fact in John's Gospel, just a few verses before today's reading it was Jesus himself who said to his first two disciples, "come and see". And somewhere in each of our lives we can think of a time when, looking back, we realise that Jesus has – probably through others – said to us, "come and see" and drawn us into taking that step that began or deepened our life of faith.

I can remember as a teenager a new vicar coming to the church where I went with my parents, and there was something about him and his preaching that made me think, I want to listen to what he has to say – for me he was the one through whom Jesus was saying, "come and see". Because we have seen, we are able to invite others to do see too, especially when they are being dismissive or negative about our faith. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Yes! Can anything good come out of Ipswich? Yes! Can anything good come out of being Christian? Yes! - A way of life for others that brings healing to the world. Come and see.

- Bishop Martin

Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace..

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

*Do not be afraid,
for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name;
you are mine.*

When you walk through the waters,
I'll be with you;
you will never sink beneath the waves.
Do not be afraid...

When the fire is burning all around you,
you will never be consumed by the flames.
Do not be afraid...

When the fear of loneliness is looming,
then remember I am at your side.
Do not be afraid...

When you dwell in the exile of a stranger,
remember you are precious in my eyes.
Do not be afraid...

You are mine, O my child,
I am your Father,
and I love you with a perfect love.
Do not be afraid...

A prayer for Epiphany

Come freshly to us now, Lord God,
And as we offer you our lives, renew in us your
gifts:

The gold of our potential.
The incense of our prayers and aspirations,
The myrrh of healing for our pain;
Feed us and nourish us
that we may grow in the life of Christ;
Fill us with your Spirit
that we may overflow with your love,
and transform the world with your glory.
Amen.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, Stacey Pratt

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refugees across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: John Chapman, Barry Stammers

Prayer for growth! Please join in this prayer at home:

"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

Our Baptism & Confirmation service has been postponed, to be rearranged when possible. Please keep Patrick and Dylan in your prayers.

Private Prayer in church *is also paused for now.* While we are all recommended to travel and mingle as little as absolutely possible, we take care of ourselves and each other by practicing caution.

Bible Basics on Zoom: starting back on Thursday 21st - an informal hour of bible reflection and discussion. This small group meets on Zoom every 2 weeks, and is very relaxed and conversational. It's open to everyone, and especially suitable for those who are newer to faith or church, or who like thinking about the bible and talking about faith with others. You are very welcome to join, just ask Rev Cat for the Zoom link!

New Vicar Search: to let you know that the process for appointing a new vicar at St Thomas' is underway. The PCC is having the required meetings with AD Rhiannon, our Area Dean Nick Atkins, and Bishop Mike. The hope is to advertise around March/April, and potentially have a new vicar appointed by September.

- Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Please email her with anything you'd like to share as this process unfolds.
- We'd love to know what you would most value in our next priest! Email or phone Rev Cat with a word or sentence saying what qualities would be most important to you.

This Week:

Sunday 17th January

10am: Zoom church - you can join by phone too! Speak to Malcolm or Rev Cat.

Monday 18th January

4.30: STPC evening prayer – all welcome, speak to Malcolm for Zoom link

7pm: Section 11 meeting (PCC)

7.30pm: STPC open prayer meeting - email Malcolm for Zoom link

Tuesday 19th January

5.30: Meditation group —livestreamed on facebook/stthomaspilgrimcommunity

Wednesday 20th January

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

7pm: PCC meeting on Zoom

Thursday 21st January

4pm: Bible Basics - all welcome, speak to Rev Cat for Zoom link to join.

7pm: Zoom Alpha

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

June Browes; Mary Bullass; Chris Chapman; Phyllis Chevous; Margaret Christian; Simon Clark; Val Derrett & family; Rebecca Devine; Sylvia & Russell Dickerson



20th: Christine Perfect

22nd: Justin Harrison

Contacts:

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Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

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Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>