

Second Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 13th June 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

'It is I who makes the green tree wither and gives the dead tree new life.'
(Ezekiel 17: 24)

When I became Rector of The Downs Benefice, two family friends each gave us an aptly named 'Rambling Rector' climbing rose. Described as strong, fragrant, resilient and vigorous, I leave it up to you to decide whether I have risen to the challenge! Not noted for my horticultural skills and with very little time to tend them, these innocent little roses seemed doomed. Though I planted one in a planter by the front door, and the other at the foot of the beautiful tree at the entrance to the church car park in our front garden, neither seemed to want to ramble, and certainly didn't produce any blooms. In fact, two years ago, they looked so close to death that I called in the experts, seeking the help of Austen Hooker and Andrew Kent.



As a result of their sound green-fingered advice, my personal determination to do everything in my power to help them grow, a good deal of prayer, and a very wet May this year, both roses seem to have surpassed themselves! As you can see, the plant by our front door is healthy and teeming with blooms and buds; the one under the tree has done exactly what I'd originally hoped, and is now happily rambling through the branches and will shortly bless all our visitors with a riot of colour!

I was mindful of all this as I read the scriptural texts set for us this week. My analogy of the roses, rooting determined efforts in prayer and spending these past two years doing everything I could to help them flourish, has meant that I have seen an outcome beyond my every hope. Similarly, this week, it has been joyful to hear the experience of a faithful parishioner, whose patient prayer over many years for a friend to find Christ suddenly and unexpectedly bearing fruit, should be an encouragement to us all. As St Paul points out, as Christians following Jesus, we are walking with a new map: *'We walk by faith, not by sight.'* (2 Corinthians 5: 7)



'Jesus is like a Tent which Shelters us in Life's Desert' by Elizabeth Wang

Ezekiel's prophetic wisdom shows God up-ending the perceived, earthly order of things. To be more precise, he describes how God completely re-configures what we see with our human eyes; what we value with our judgmental minds and what we crave with our material hearts.

His prophesy of judgment ends in hope. When the people put their hope in earthly saviours they were disappointed. Only God could give them true hope. God said He would plant a branch, the Messiah, whose kingdom would grow and become a shelter for all who come to Him. This prophesy was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Equally, our part in God's kingdom is profound. No matter how small we might feel as individuals, together we can accomplish great things in the shelter of Christ's name.

To change our standards of judgment so completely is very hard. But we make our lives even more difficult than we need to by assuming that what we need to do is something huge. Jesus suggests it needn't be like this! It might be as simple as just getting up day by day and doing what has to be done – faithfully, determinedly, and actively!



Source – Shutterstock

Jesus is asking us to base our reality on a different footing to the rest of the world – exchanging the targets and accountabilities of the material world for the values of God's kingdom. No matter how hard we work, we might not see the fruits of our labours in His name just yet, but, Jesus tells us, any small seed we sow in the rich soil of His love will not be lost. In fact, a bit like my Rambling Rector in the tree at the bottom of my garden, planted in faith and nurtured in hopeful prayer, its sudden flourishing is entirely in God's timing, not mine!

Walking by faith might just be a matter of putting one foot in front of the other and moving imperceptibly into God's reality. As we begin to emerge from the Coronavirus pandemic, isn't this encouraging news!

Yours, in the shelter of Christ,

Jax

Rev'd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Prayer for HMQ on the occasion of her Official Birthday



Almighty God,
we pray, that your servant Elizabeth, our Queen,
who, by your providence has received the governance of this realm,
may continue to grow in every virtue,
that, imbued with your heavenly grace,
she may be preserved from all that is harmful and evil
and, being blessed with your favour
may, with the royal family,
come at last into your presence,
reunited with her consort and husband, Prince Philip,
through Christ who is the way, the truth and the life
and who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen

Collect Prayer for the Second Sunday after Trinity

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Ezekiel 17:22-24

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'I will take a branch from the top of a tall cedar, and I will plant it on the top of Israel's highest mountain. It will become a majestic cedar, sending forth its branches and producing seed. Birds of every sort will nest in it, finding shelter in the shade of its branches. And all the trees will know that it is I, the Lord, who cuts the tall tree down and makes the short tree grow tall. It is I who makes the green tree wither and gives the dead tree new life. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do what I said!'

Mark 4:26-34 - Parables of the Growing Seed and Mustard Seed

Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

Parable of the Mustard Seed

Jesus said, 'How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.' Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Service Schedule

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am with the exception of Café Church, which starts at 4pm.

Until we hear further from the Government and the Church of England, please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
13 th June				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
20 th June	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer		
23 rd June (Wed)			Holy Communion		
27 th June		Holy Communion			
4 th July	Morning Prayer			Morning Prayer	
11 th July		Morning Prayer			Holy Communion
14 th July (Wed)			Holy Communion		
18 th July				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
25 th July	Morning Prayer		Holy Communion		
1 st August		Morning Prayer	Café Church		Holy Communion
8 th August	Morning Prayer			Morning Prayer	
15 th August		Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		
22 nd August	Holy Communion			Morning Prayer	
29 th August			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer