

Fifth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 4th July 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘If any place refuses to listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate.’

(Mark 6: 11)

As the month of June blossoms into the promise of July, we arrive at Petertide in our Church calendar. This is traditionally a time when the ordination of Deacons and Priests takes place. This year, despite Coronavirus restrictions and the continued absence of the Bishop of Winchester, it is a relief to hear our ordinands will be anointed in the cure of souls to which God calls them – albeit in an empty Cathedral via Zoom. I ask you to pray for all those offering their lives in service to God, and to pray for Bishop Debbie as she is tasked with speaking truth to power. I have reprinted her recent letter to the diocese, below.



‘Jesus Sends Out the Twelve’ by Dirk Walker

In today's Gospel, we find Jesus going back to Nazareth, where we hear He was not well received by His own townsfolk. The locals seemingly can't quite shake off Jesus' past. His illegitimacy is hinted at – He is spoken of as Mary's son. Culturally this would have been quite a pointed insult as sons were always referred to as being 'the son of the father.'

Jesus' tradesman's background is also criticised. Far from being upheld as the gifted profession it is today, being a carpenter in Jesus' time was considered a menial job. Jesus' ordinariness is mocked and stands in the way of people accepting Him. 'How can an uneducated man be a Rabbi?' the people ask. They simply cannot accept Jesus' wisdom and miracles because of their deep-seated prejudices.



Basilica of the Annunciation, Nazareth – Source: Shutterstock

However, Jesus realises that His message needs to be heard by as many people as possible. So, He dismisses His home-crowd, and sends out the 12 disciples to spread the Good News in other places. Jesus warns them that, just as He has experienced in His own home, so they will also face rejection and disbelief. Jesus tells them not to waste time on those who will not listen, but to move on to find willing ears elsewhere.

We will all face times when what we share about Jesus is not well received; when we are rebuffed for our faith. I can particularly recall this happening to me when I was first ordained. My clerical collar was a clear sign of my faith in Jesus Christ to all around. What was once a private matter between me and God was now manifestly public. Then as now, individuals have often taken exception to my faith and will hurl abuse. I have learned to pray for those people as we never know what might have precipitated their reaction.

This passage from Mark reassures us that, when our evangelising is rebuffed or scorned, it isn't necessarily because the message has been poorly presented – after all, Jesus' own words didn't draw people to His truth every time! Even though He was a compelling preacher, delivering the word of God direct to our hearts, Jesus was not going to be heard by people who had already closed their ears to Him. Mark gives us this experience of Jesus and His followers to reassure us that the learning process is a two-way street!



'Halleluia' by Mike Moyers

This passage is therefore as much about the listener as the speaker. What, then, happens when we listen to God's word? If we don't listen attentively, we will miss out on all Jesus is trying to tell us, just as the Nazarenes did.

In our own spiritual growth, we must ask ourselves how we might become better listeners – what would better help us to hear God? We must pray for our preachers; actively ask the Holy Spirit to help us listen attentively, and take time to reflect on what scripture and the sermons we hear might be trying to say to us personally.

Particularly as we welcome new Deacons and Priests to break open the Gospels in ways which speak into our times, and as our Diocese confronts its own crisis of leadership and governance, let us pray that we are truly receptive to Christ's word as we strive to build up this community in His holy name.

Yours, listening to Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin,
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Top Tips from Austen Hooker



Source – BBC

Last week, we began a series of gardening tips from the green-fingered Austen Hooker of Littleton, who has just moved into Flowerdown Nursing Home. Sadly, Austen became very poorly earlier this week and our Benefice Prayer Chain lifted him up in prayer. I am delighted to report that our beloved gardener has begun to pick up, and tonight he was merrily chatting away to us, quoting from Gilbert and Sullivan, and was ready with a top gardening tip for July. Praise God indeed!

Austen asks, ‘Do your tomatoes split open while they are still growing on the vine?’ When I was a little girl, I used to fantasise these cracks in the perfect flesh of the fruit were where tomato fairies flew in and out! However, Austen has shattered that theory by revealing how cracks in the skin of your tomatoes are a sure sign of inconsistent watering causing fluctuations in the growth rates of the tomato. From the moment the little tomato buds begin to form, we must water the plants regularly and consistently. If we don’t, the inside of the tomato will grow faster than the skin and – hey presto, cracks will abound!! So, consistent watering throughout July is the order of the day!! Thank you, dear Austen. Our prayers are with you.

Collect Prayer for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the
glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Nazareth depicted on a Byzantine Mosaic

Mark 6:1-13 - The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, 'Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?' Then they scoffed, 'He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.' They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

Then Jesus told them, 'A prophet is honoured everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family.' And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples

Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits. He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveller's bag, no money. He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes.

'Wherever you go,' he said, 'stay in the same house until you leave town. But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate.'

So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God. And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

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>
<i>4th July</i>	Morning Prayer			Morning Prayer	
<i>11th July</i>		Morning Prayer			Holy Communion
<i>14th July (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>18th July</i>				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
<i>25th July</i>	Morning Prayer		Holy Communion		
<i>1st August</i>		Morning Prayer	Café Church		Holy Communion
<i>8th August</i>	Morning Prayer			Matins	
<i>15th August</i>		Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		
<i>22nd August</i>	Holy Communion			Morning Prayer	
<i>29th August</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>5th Sept</i>	Harvest Festival		Café Church		Morning Prayer
<i>12th Sept</i>		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion	
<i>15th Sept (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>19th Sept</i>	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer	Pet Service	
<i>26th Sept</i>		Harvest Service			Harvest Festival

Letter from Bishop Debbie Sellin, 29th June 2021



Dear Friends,

Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'. Matthew 16: 15 and 16

This is Petertide, the season when we remember how Peter declared his faith and trust in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, and how Jesus entrusted Peter to build his church, a church that we have the privilege of being part of today. It has been wonderful to see so many of you each Monday morning for Diocesan Prayer over the last five weeks. Coming together in this way has provided such encouragement, and our time with one another has reinforced to me what it means to be part of God's church and what unites us as a diocese. Given the busy weeks ahead, we will now pause Zoom morning prayer for the Summer, with a view to looking at future arrangements for the Autumn.

It goes without saying that this remains a hugely challenging period for us as a diocese. I realise many of you feel you have not heard enough since I wrote to you almost six weeks ago, to inform you that Bishop Tim would be stepping back. Again, I am conscious that many questions remain unanswered, but I can confirm that the process to consider matters raised concerning leadership and governance is progressing.

Facilitated conversations are continuing and, in order for them to be given the time and space they need, Bishop Tim has agreed these will be his sole focus until the end of August. I recognise many will want to know more and have questions but we do need to ensure the process is held as confidential at this stage and I would urge all to keep those concerned in our prayers. Once we can say more then of course we will. The Bishop of London and the Bishop at Lambeth are being kept fully aware of the ongoing process and are providing welcome support, although they are not part of the conversations.

Bishop David has agreed to continue standing back from ministry in Winchester Diocese to enable the conversations to run their course.

I am grateful to you for your prayers through this time and am aware also that, nationally, we continue to live in a time of considerable uncertainty. The overriding questions we have lived with for so many months throughout the pandemic appear to fluctuate almost daily: from when our lives will return to normal, through to whether they even will at all. The answers remain far from clear. Yet, you all continue to work

tirelessly for your parishes, your communities, and for each other. This remains a source of great inspiration to me personally.

Finally, and on a particularly joyful note, we have Diocesan Ordinations to look forward to this weekend. Please do add **this year's ordinands to your prayers (click here for their names)** as we welcome their ministry into our parishes.

With best wishes,

+Debbie