

***Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 19th September 2021***



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.’

(Mark 9: 31)

I can't believe how, despite all its contingent turmoil and tumult, this year has sped past so quickly and that we are already on the cusp of autumn and in fig season again! Whilst I am dancing for joy at the prospect of all things Ficus Carica, I know that for others, the change in seasons from summer to autumn heralds the difficult prospect of endings: shorter days, falling leaves and a sense of darkness which cause disturbances in the circadian system of our minds and bodies, causing Seasonal Affective Disorder. There was definitely a palpable chill in the evening air as my family enjoyed some glorious days near Lyme Regis celebrating our son, William's 30th birthday this past week. I'm afraid to say that I let my circadian desire for chocolate rule my head and my stomach!



Sunset over the maize fields at Musbury, Dorset

It feels as if a momentum of endings was building up in Jesus' mind as He travelled with His apostles from the coastal regions of Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum? Perhaps Jesus felt an unexpected autumnal chill in the air as He led those closest to Him away from the crowds in order to open their minds to the purpose of His earthly presence. It certainly seems as though the burden of Jesus' mortality was a prescient motive in the way He rebuked His disciples for their pride and ambition. Who would be the greatest? Certainly not those who felt entitled by their status in Christ's company to be seated at His right side in heaven. No! Jesus was unequivocal that it would be those who served others in need who would be assured of a place in His Kingdom.



'Sea of Galilee' – Jewish Journal

As the miracle of creation shifts our seasons from the flowering of summer into a golden phase of harvest, perhaps like the disciples we might be wise to respond to Jesus' prompting and reflect on whether the focus of our zeal, our driving force if you will, is for our own self-aggrandisement or focussed on sharing the abundant riches of our lives with those whose suffering is as palpable as the gathering mists over our harvested fields.

'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.'

If we want to be part of Jesus' resurrection promise, we need to start living fully now – living to serve; living as faith-filled witnesses to the only sure Way; living the unconditional and exuberant generosity of little children, whose honest hearts see and seek all things for the good of all. Jesus reminds us that none of our earthly lives are our own – not even His! Jesus too will have to die in order to rise beyond the sting of death. For us to do the same, we must be grounded in the reality of our humble beginnings: we came from the dust of the earth, and to dust we shall return. The only thing that gives us life is God's grace.

This turning of the seasons then, is an opportunity for us to reflect on the mortal ending of our days here on earth – yet, instead of allowing our bodily rhythms to make us maudlin and depressed, let our faith in Christ fill us with the fire of His love! In this way, we won't have time to worry about ourselves – we will be too busy in the work of Jesus' earthly mission: filling our hearts with the joy of serving others! Then, Jesus tells us we will truly live!

Yours, alive in the purpose of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

The following apposite reflection on our being formed and returning to the dust of the earth by Revd David Runcorn was given to me by Sheila Trussler, a member of the Benefice Julian group. If you enjoy reading it, and want to find out more about the Julian group or become part of its regular pattern of meeting to pray and reflect on scripture, do please give the Benefice Office a call on (01962) 880845



'Bless the Lord O my soul, for He knows how we were made; He remembers that we are dust. As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.'

(Psalm 103: 1, 14-17)

Today we remember the dust of our human origins. We come from the dust of the earth. We are mortal and finite. But we also remember what God creates with dust. We are part of something much greater.

So dust I may be, but I am restless dust. I am dust that prays, loves, worships and hopes. There is a life stirring within me that is not my own. Deep down I know I am part of something much greater. An improbable story of life, wonder and mystery stirs within me. It is renewed in me with every breath I take. It may deepen with the years. I am dust with dreams of glory, of a life that is not yet my own and that I can barely imagine.

From childhood onwards so many of our stories echo this - stories of lives trapped, disfigured, lost or unvalued but that are really beautiful and beloved, all waiting for the kiss of one whose love is true to release the spells and reveal them for who they truly are. The ugly duckling is a majestic swan; the scullery maid is really the king's true love; the toad is a handsome prince. Dust I may be, but I am desired dust, beloved dust; dust with a destiny.

My deepest struggle may not, after all, be with my sin and waywardness (though these are real). It may instead lie in accepting the extraordinary love with which God chooses to love me in all my dustiness and in trusting what he will yet reveal of who I truly am in his sight.

Revd David Runcorn – taken from ‘*New Daylight*’ daily bible readings and comment from BRF.

Top Tips from Austen Hooker

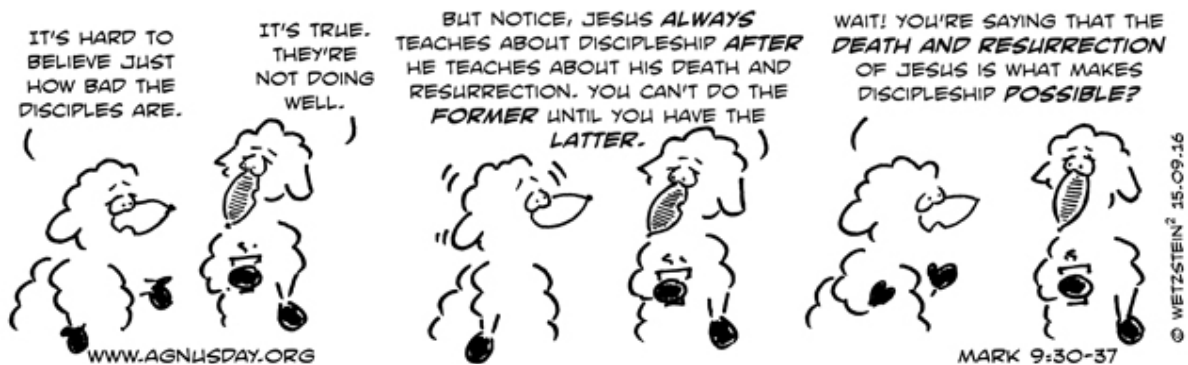


Fig season is here! And although they originate in warm Mediterranean climates, figs also manage to thrive in sunny and sheltered, well-drained soils of the British Isles. However, despite its mild climate, the fig tree in our cottage garden in the New Forest has only ever managed to produce (often plentiful) rock hard bullets – far from the soft and succulent fruits for which I yearn all year long! What am I doing wrong?

Evidently, my quest to bring our figs to perfect harvest is as fraught as the strivings of an earlier ‘Top Tips’ gardener to raise a successful apricot harvest. Austen prefaced his reply to me with a cheeky smile, telling me that no matter how warm I think my cottage garden, it isn’t warm enough for a fig! Interestingly, I have now learned that the buds of the fig tree take two years to come to fruition so, it’s not so much how warm it is *this* year that counts, but how warm it was the year before when the fruit buds are setting. Austen went off on a reverie of ‘fig trees he had known’ but the best of his stories concerned a very young, local lass, whose own father was an excellent gardener. As a young child, this lucky girl would lie under the fig tree in late summer eating the ripe, warm fruits as they fell direct into her open mouth – my idea of heaven! As for my fig tree, Austen tells me the only course of action is to get down on my knees and pray!

Collect Prayer for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
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.



Mark 9: 30-37 - Jesus Again Predicts His Death

Leaving that region, they travelled through Galilee. Jesus didn't want anyone to know he was there, for he wanted to spend more time with his disciples and teach them. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.' 32 They didn't understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, 'What were you discussing out on the road?' But they didn't answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, 'Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.'

Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me.'

Schedule of Services

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, unless marked differently on the table below

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>19th Sept</i>	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer	Pet Service on the Green, Woodman Close	
<i>26th Sept</i>		Harvest Service			Harvest Festival
<i>3rd Oct</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church		6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – William Tyndale
<i>10th Oct</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>17th Oct</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	6pm - Peace & Wholeness	8am - Holy Communion	
<i>24th Oct</i>			Morning Prayer	Harvest Festival	8am - Holy Communion
<i>27th Oct (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>31st Oct</i>	<i>With Wh</i>	All Souls Service		6pm – All Souls Service	3pm – All Souls Service <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – Thomas à Becket