

**All Souls**  
**Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021**



Dear Friends in Christ,

***‘What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!’*** (Luke 14: 15)

The theological maxim ‘Life imitates Gospel truth’ plays out in many areas of our lives, particularly in and through pivotal experiences of birth, building relationships and in the agonies of loss. I am sure many of you will also recognise scripture playing itself out in the daily unfolding of life events; some of which we sense as ‘déjà vu.’ I had a direct experience of what theologians call ‘hermeneutical interpretation’ earlier this week.

After a particularly unexpected negative retail experience in Weeke on Thursday, I found myself haring into Winchester, where I was mercifully able to successfully resolve a time-sensitive transaction. I felt thankful for the blessing of a young woman’s gentle smile and grace-filled service, and resolved to pray for the individual who had been so curt earlier in the day, feeling sure there were stresses in that soul’s life which I couldn’t have begun to know. Deciding to return to the Benefice Office with a calming coffee for me and Caroline, I watched as the Barista lovingly drew creative hearts in the milky froth of the coffee before concealing his work with a take-away lid. A man who quietly did his best for others whether or not anyone noticed, received my thanks for his generous hospitality of spirit with bashful smiles.



***‘Steamed Milk Latte Art’ by Donny Morrison***

This weekend, our Gospel reading from Luke shows us how, at a meal, Jesus teaches about humility and hospitality. Although he is speaking to those around Him, Jesus is also speaking into our own hearts – to our ego and our selfish capacity for self-aggrandisement. The Pharisees want to know about Jesus. They are perturbed. How can they reconcile their increasing sense of unease at Jesus' insistent questioning of their ungodly values? They want to stop Jesus shining a mirror into their hearts. They want to shut him up and settle back into their lives feathered by the sacrifice and subjugation of those they extort.



***'Sanctuary Prayer' by Yoram Raanan***

But Jesus won't let this happen. Time and again we see Him refusing to be sucked in by worldly expectations and entitlements. Instead, Jesus speaks into the flawed values of our lives. He asks us to start again with a whole new set of values which place God at the heart of our lives. Rather than asking *'How can I improve my personal standing at the party?'* Jesus is asking us to choose *this* question: *'How can I make sure that everyone else gets an invitation?'* We need to learn that none of us has done anything to earn our own invitation to God's banquet, so why should we begrudge God's grace to others?

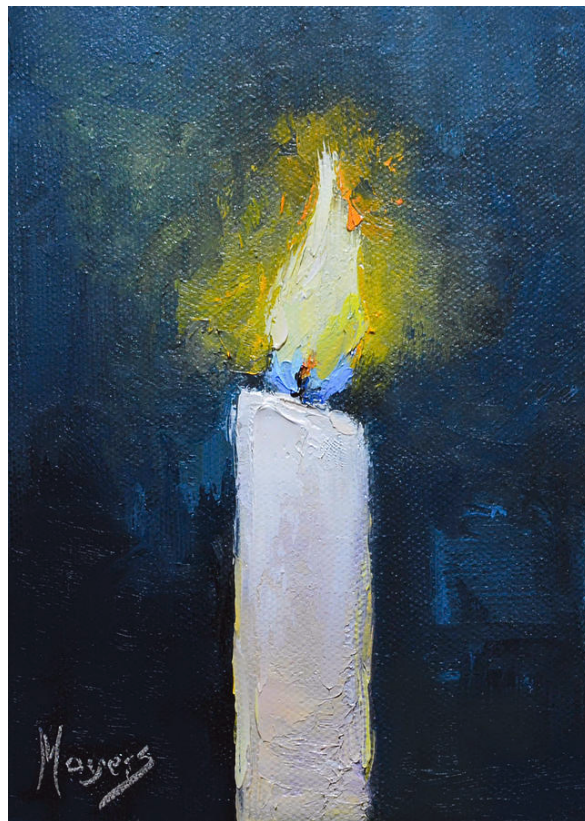
Augustine of Hippo said:

*'Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Righteous Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.'*

What a challenge for us in our own lives today! How can we keep these two gifts of God dancing in harmony? How can we bring hope to others by living effective lives for God? The young woman who helped me in Winchester and the Barista making coffee each, in their own gentle ways, seemed to instinctively know how to live out Jesus' Gospel message of living their lives in loving service to others, whether or not anyone around them noticed or expressed gratitude for their grace-filled generosity.

Ignatius of Loyola offers us a daily exercise to help us reconcile the powerful movements of our hearts, allowing them to flower as hope. He encourages us to begin by recalling God's presence: *When did I see you today? When did I love you today? When did I respond to You with an open heart?* In asking ourselves these questions each day, we are able to refine the flawed values of our lives. Just as Jesus asks of us, we are able to start afresh with a whole new set of values which place God at the heart of our lives.

Jesus teaches us two things this morning: First, that we must learn gratitude as we count our blessings instead of allowing personal greed to consume us. Second, that we must have *active* compassion for the needs of others. Simply sitting passively, hoping that *others* will act to help the vulnerable to flourish is not acceptable to God. We must join in too, so that the gifts of righteous anger and courage, with which we have all been blessed, will draw us closer to living in God's grace.



***'Illumine' by Mike Moyers***

The Feast of All Souls arrives in our midst this weekend, and draws us once again into a time of remembrance and thanksgiving. We commemorate the lives of our loved ones who have died; sharing with each other the preciousness of our love for them and theirs for us. In this poignant opening of our hearts, we let slip the great British reserve, and come together as one; allowing ourselves and each other to be vulnerable. The Celts described this happening as a time of 'thinness,' a time of our trusting each other in the shared experience of grief and loss; a time of reciprocal empathy and knowingness which passes all ordinary understanding. In our mutual loss, so we gather together as we were made to do – seeking solace and finding God's peace in each other.

Perhaps, as we call out the names of those whose lives we remember and light candles to kindle our souls with the warmth of their memory, it is the collective experience of our mother hearts uniting with the suffering of Mary that unites us.

Perhaps we glimpse something of Mary's desolation, as her soul is pierced by the prophecy of her own son's traumatic death for the sins of humankind. Except that in our personal revelation of loss, the outcome is markedly different. For, unlike Mary, we have the privilege of hindsight. We have Gospel insights which point us to a truth which tells us how earthly death will not be the end we fear, but the beginning.

As those we love slip from our sight, Jesus' gift of eternal grace and hospitality in dying for us and rising from mortal death, blesses our beloved with a re-birth beyond our wildest imaginings – where we can only imagine the joy there must be in attending a banquet in the Kingdom of God.

Yours, in the peace of Christ,

Jax

**Rector, The Downs Benefice**

**Collect Prayer for All Souls' Day**

Everlasting God, our maker and redeemer,  
grant us with all the faithful departed,  
the sure benefits of thy Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection,  
that, in the last day, when thou dost gather up all things in Christ,  
we may with them enjoy the fullness of thy promises;  
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,  
who liveth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

JESUS REPLIED: "“LOVE THE  
LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART  
AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL  
YOUR MIND.” THIS IS THE FIRST AND  
GREATEST COMMANDMENT. AND THE  
SECOND IS LIKE IT: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR  
“LOVE AS YOURSELF.””  
MATTHEW  
22:37-  
39

### Luke 14:12-24 – Parable of the Great Feast

Then Jesus turned to his host. 'When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,' he said, 'don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbours. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.'

Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, 'What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!'

Jesus replied with this story: 'A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' After the servant had done this, he reported, 'There is still room for more.' So his master said, 'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'

### 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](mailto: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>
<b>31<sup>st</sup> Oct</b>	<i>With Wherwell</i>	All Souls Service		6pm – All Souls Service	3pm – All Souls Service <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Autumn Meditation Series –

					Thomas à Becket
<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nov (Tues)</i>			6pm – All Souls’ Service		
<i>7<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church ( <i>in Church Room</i> )		
<i>11<sup>th</sup> Nov (Thurs)</i>			10.55am – Act of Remembrance <i>at the War Memorial</i>		
<i>14<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	10.55am Remembrance Service	10.55am Remembrance Service <i>at the War Memorial</i>	<i>Service at Sir John Moore Barracks. Details to be confirmed.</i>	10.55am Remembrance Service	<i>With Chilbolton</i>
<i>21<sup>st</sup> Nov</i>		Morning Prayer		8am – Holy Communion (BCP)	
<i>24<sup>th</sup> Nov (Wed)</i>			Mid-Week Holy Communion		
<i>28<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>			11.15am – Patronal Festival	Morning Prayer and Baptism	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)