St Laurence Church, Northfield **Daily Bible Meditations**

13th – 18th July *Compiled by Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

Monday 13th July

Psalm 50 : 7-15 Matthew 10 : 34 -11.1

"Shaken not stirred!" Do Jesus' words surprise you? Not peace but a sword? Picture yourself hearing them for the first time. And then Jesus goes on to seemingly shake family life up at its core! But do not stir from loving your family; just make sure that the God who loves them even more than you do (and even family members aren't that lovable all the time) is also a focus of your love, but not so much that you are blinded to God's presence in others.

Tuesday 14th July (John Keble, Priest, Tractarian, Poet d1866: Keble College, Oxford is our patron)

Psalm 48 : 1-7 Matthew 11 : 20-24

I sometimes wonder whether if I'd seen Jesus in action whether I would have believed and repented or been sceptical and dismissive …. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are Jewish towns on the north of the sea of Galilee. Tyre, Sidon and are coastal ports in Gentile territory (today Lebanon) and Sodom is further south near the Dead Sea. Why the comparison? The people of the former had seen Jesus in action and few had repented, the latter have a history of people repenting. We all struggle to repent or forgive others at times. Bring those hurts of the past before God and maybe tremble and writhe like today's Psalmist but **then** read again Psalm 50.15 (from yesterday)

Wednesday 15th July (Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, c.862)

Psalm 94 : 5-11 Matthew 11 : 25-27

Is it raining today? Today is St Swithun's day. Swithun asked to be buried humbly when he died on 2nd July 862 but when the new cathedral of Winchester was built the then bishop moved his bones into a shrine into the cathedral in 971 despite dire warnings that to do so would trigger storms – and it rained for 40 days afterwards. What do you do when you can't see through the windows because of rain or steam? Maybe children can be to our faith that of windscreen wipers to the windows we fail to see through.

Thursday 16th July

Psalm 102 : 14-21 Matthew 11 : 28-end

Picture yourself carrying in your arms a heavy burden. Now put it down, sit down and catch your breath. As you sit someone comes alongside you and offers to help. Do you resist? Maybe at first. But then allow yourself to put on this strange yoke he offers you. Split your burden in two and hang it from the two arms of the yoke. How do you feel as you set off on your journey again? Re-read through the psalm mentally listing the burdens which the people named in it may be carrying. You won't be able to carry them all but could you, somehow, pick up one?

Friday 17th July

Psalm 32 : 1-8 Matthew 12 : 1-8

Are there some burdens you don't need to be carrying as actually you didn't break the law at that point or maybe the law has change since so whilst you did break it then, had it been today you would be guiltless, or if convicted the sentence would now be spent? Lay down those burdens!
Now spend sometime reflecting on what you hunger for and how you can meet that hunger, and do so with mercy.

Saturday 18th July

Psalm 10 : 1-5a, 12 Matthew 12 : 14-21

The conspiring Pharisees! Jesus' reaction is to depart - read again v1 of today's psalm. Then read onwards and consider 'the wicked' and whether the description of them applies to those conspiring Pharisees…. Does Matthew's quotation of Isaiah's description of God's servant answer the plea of the psalmist in v12? Note: in that often in the OT 'the poor' refers to those who are 'the faithful ones' rather than those who have little. How can we join in with God's bringing in 'victorious justice?'

20th – 25th July *Compiled by Theresa Morton (Assistant Curate)*

Monday 20th July

Psalm 50 : 3-7, 14 Matthew 12 : 38-42

God can sometimes seem a long way from us. I expect from time to time we all ask God to give us a sign that he's there, just to be sure. We too can be like the Queen of the South Matthew mentions here and want to see some kind of proof (see 1 Kings 10:1-13). Perhaps the Psalm helps remind us that we are in a covenant relationship with God. "I am God, your God" (verse 7). Are we too busy focussing on our own priorities to really pay attention to what God is doing in and around us?

Tuesday 21st July

Psalm 85 : 1-7 Matthew 12 : 46-end

I wonder how Jesus's mother and brothers would have felt hearing Jesus's words! This passage doesn't suggest we should turn our backs on our families, but it does call us to recognise that in Christ we are part of a much bigger family; our church family and even beyond that to all Christians across the world, including those that have gone before us and those that will come after. How does being a part of that much bigger family change how we think, how we pray, how we live our lives?

Wednesday 22nd July (Mary Magdalene)

Psalm 42 : 1-10 John 20 : 1-2, 11-18

Today is the festival of Mary Magdalene, one of the most widely speculated about people of the Bible. In this passage, John shows us a broken Mary, mourning and in distress. Mary may have known the words of Psalm 42; perhaps the opening lines were running through her mind as she longed for her Lord. We're fortunate; we know the end of the story. We know of Christ's resurrection, and of the hope of all the good there is to come. Who else needs to hear this story of resurrection and hope today? Perhaps you could pray for them.

Thursday 23rd July

Psalm 36 : 5-10 Matthew 13 : 10-17

This New Testament passage has perplexed readers for centuries. It seems that Jesus didn't always want his listeners to understand what he says. But the preceding line, in verse 9, reminds us that we need to listen carefully. There will always be parts of the Bible we don't really understand. Can you bring to mind a Bible passage or story that you particularly struggle with? Perhaps this is an opportunity to read it again, to think about it a bit more; maybe pray over it and ask God to reveal its meaning to you.

Friday 24th July

Psalm 23 Matthew 13 : 18-23

Psalm 23 is one of the best known and most loved of the Psalms. It gives great comfort through many of life's difficult moments. We are reassured by the words in the first verse "I shall not want"; God will provide what we need. Today's New Testament passage reinforces this when it describes the abundance received by those who follow Christ (verse 23).
Re-read that first line of the Psalm again: "I shall not want." Perhaps there is another way of thinking about this. Yes it is a promise from God, but is it also a decision we ought to make? Do we find ourselves wanting more than we have, more than we need? If we're honest, can we, perhaps, be a bit greedy at times? Perhaps we should spend time today noticing all the good in our lives, and thank God for it, asking him to help us be grateful and satisfied.

Saturday 25th July (James the Apostle)

Psalm 126 Matthew 20 : 20-28

Imagine Jesus asking you "What do you want me to do for you?"
Spend some time thinking about what your answer would be, and why.

27th July – 1st August *Compiled by Fr John Richards*

Monday 27th July

Psalm 82 Matthew 13 : 31-35

The mustard plant Jesus refers to was very different from the plant we know. It had very small seeds and grew into a tree! What Jesus was saying in this story is that the Kingdom of Heaven starts with the smallest beginnings, and none of us knows where it will end.

Think for a moment of your faith.

Go back to the beginning, if you can. Remember when it was the size of a tiny seed, and how it has grown and perhaps affected your whole life. Is it still growing? Can people see it? Do you share it? Do the birds of the air or other people find shade and lodge in your branches?

Tuesday 28th July

Psalm 79 : 8-end Matthew 13 : 36-43

These words of Jesus are full of meaning and are really worth thinking about closely. But there are four great truths that shine out and provide us with our meditation. Firstly, we must be on our guard. The devil is always ready to catch us when we stumble, always seeking and waiting to destroy the good seed. Secondly, how hard it is to distinguish between those of the Kingdom and those who are not. Thirdly, we should not be so quick with our judgements of other people. And finally, Jesus teaches us that it is God alone who can discern the good and the bad. How does this all fit into your life? Can you see yourself in this parable? Have you ever rushed to judge, and been proved wrong?

Wednesday 29th July (Mary, Martha and Lazarus; companions of Our Lord)

Psalm 49 : 1-10, 16 John 12 : 1-8.

This is a story about Mary, Martha and Lazarus who were friends of Jesus, and is full of meaning. Put yourself into each of the characters position and see how it feels. This part of the story reminds us that some things we can do almost any time, but some things we will never do, unless we grasp the chance when it comes. When Judas comes into the story, the mood changes. His behaviour also reminds us to do things now, for the chance so often never comes again, and the failure to do them, especially the failure to express love brings bitter remorse. Are there times in your life when you missed an opportunity? Are you burdened with regret? Think about how you can put this right?

Thursday 30th July

Psalm 146 : 1-5 Matthew 13 : 47-53

It seems only natural that Jesus should use stories and illustrations from fishing when he was teaching and speaking to fishermen. He is talking about their everyday lives and it should remind us of our everyday lives. Think of the people you meet everyday, those you know and those you just about recognise. The list may be longer than you think. Could you do more? Is there room for improvement? How does our discipleship affect our ordinary lives and the people we meet?

Friday 31st July

Psalm 69 : 4-10 Matthew 13 : 54-end

This week we have heard a lot of the short parables of Jesus. Which one of them has affected you most? Which one did you find most challenging, which one was the most helpful? All of Jesus' parables contain great truths, and we do well to incorporate them into our own Christian life. Think about how you can do this.

Saturday 1st August

Psalm 69 : 14-20 Matthew 14 : 1-12

This passage about John the Baptist, reads like a tragic drama. Each character plays an important role in the story. Ask yourself how you feel about the story, does it make you angry? Which of Herod's family is the most guilty? Do we see anything of ourselves in this dramatic story of John's death? How do you think Jesus felt? What does it teach us about the way we live?

3rd – 8th August *Compiled by Fr David (Associate Priest)*

Monday 3rd August

Psalm 119 : 89-96 Matthew 14 : 13-21

Meditate first then read the passage from Matthew's Gospel.

It is a hot day and you decide to take a ride across a lake in a small sail boat. The owner of the boat explains that he wishes to go up the hill across the lake with his friend and asks if that is ok. What was the trip across the lake like? You expected the hillside to be clear but it is crowded with people of all ages. Out of curiosity you follow the crowd. A teacher speaks to the crowd and his disciples bless five loaves and two fish. You all sit down. What is this area like? Is it hard and rock or soft and grass covered. The people next to you share their food with you and talk about what they have heard. What do they say? How do you feel about what they say? What do you remember about this day; crossing the lake, the view from the hillside, the people you met or the things that the teacher said?

Tuesday 4th August

Psalm 102 : 16-21 Matthew 14 : 22-end

Are you able to find the sailors and the boat that brought you across the lake? Do you return in the same or another boat? As you return a storm blows up. When you arrive at the home shore you are anxious but relieved. As you return across the lake you see first one figure then a second figure walking on the water, one of them is the teacher. How do you feel about this? When you get back across the lake it is morning and the people who went ahead recognise the teacher. Are you surprised when they gather all those who are ill to see him? Are you surprised when they are all healed?

Wednesday 5th August (Oswald, King of Northumbria, Martyr, 642)

Psalm 144 : 1-7, 11-16 John 16 : 29-end

You are sat in the garden on a warm day as you wonder how we will get free from the impact of the virus. How will those with no job get by? In Jesus' day those with no income would have no home and soon die. Jesus healed people to proclaim his glory and that of the Father. Where is the glory in the impact of the virus and ways of dealing with it? Do you believe that many people recognise God's hand in healing people of coronavirus for the scientific knowledge, for the caring or is it all attributed to human skill? Where is the glory in families who are destitute? Where is the glory in empty buildings left by companies that have closed? How can we each reveal the glory of God? How can we find peace?

Read the passage again. Where can you find peace despite the problems of the world that hem you in on every side?

Thursday 6th August (The Transfiguration of our Lord)

Psalm 97 Luke 9 : 28-36

Imagine an imaginary friend sat next to you as you reflect on the day past. What times of joy in creation in other people, simply being, did you experience. Were there any times of sadness that you saw, any events that caused you concern? Was Jesus in the times of Joy, the times of sadness, the times of concern? Did you glimpse the glory of God at any time, no matter how fleeting? Tell your friend about all this……..

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Does your friend respond with a comment on what you have told them, say nothing or something that at first seems not connected with the events that you related. After a while your friend leaves. How do you feel about the events of the day and sharing that experience with your friend?

Friday 7th August

Psalm 137 : 1-6 Matthew 16 : 24-end

You are walking in a park. You take a seat. As you sit someone comes along and sits on a seat on the opposite side of the path and to the side. This person asks how you are? What do you say? Do you ask them how they feel? Are you anxious to move away? Are you concerned for your wellbeing? What about the wellbeing of the person you spoke to you? Where is Jesus in this encounter? Is Jesus present in the person who sat and spoke to you, in a another person looking on, in your response? Ask Jesus to reveal the glory of God in the experience of your life and say farewell to the person across the path from you as you prepare to walk on.

Saturday 8th August

Psalm 9 : 7-11 Matthew 17 : 14-20

Think of a time when you have witnessed someone who is ill or injured. It might be someone who collapsed in the street, someone involved in a road traffic accident, someone who has had a fall. Picture the scene and the person. How do you feel? Are you anxious for their wellbeing, concerned for the relief of their pain? Do you wish you could do something to help them. How did you respond? How do you wish you had responded with the benefit of hindsight? If ambulance personnel or a doctor is in attendance what do they do and how do they speak to the person. Are you able to pray for the sick person? If someone is choking do you pray or act? If someone is breathing their last do you prepare to resuscitate them or pray?

Read the passage from Matthew again.

10th – 14th August *Compiled by Claire Whitmore (Ordinand)*

Monday 10th August (St Laurence)

Psalm 148 : 1-4, 12-13 John 12 : 24-26

Today the Church of England remembers St Laurence, our patron. St Laurence was a deacon in Rome in the 3rd century, responsible for distributing support for the poor. By some accounts, he gathered the poor of the city and declared to those who had come to claim money from the Church "Here is the treasure of the Church." He was martyred by the Roman Empire.
The story of St Laurence and today's Gospel remind us of our call to serve Jesus, sometimes at great cost, and often among those who are most marginalised and overlooked by the world. Who might that mean in your life?

Tuesday 11th August

Psalm 119 : 65-72 Matthew 18 : 1-5, 10, 12-14,

Theodore Roosevelt is supposed to have said "comparison is the thief of joy", and it's true that it is often a temptation to compare our own successes and failures to those of others. Jesus says that rather than trying to be the greatest, instead we should seek humility, resting in the knowledge that God loves each of us deeply. Spend some time basking in the love of God, and try to let go of the temptation to try and be greater than others.

Wednesday 12th August

Psalm 113 Matthew 18 : 15-20

Life inevitably involves conflicts, big and small. What do you think of this as a model for dealing with disagreement? Re-read the passage. Are there moments in your life when following this advice might have helped? What do you think it means to treat someone as a Gentile and a tax collector"? How did Jesus treat those people?

Thursday 13th August

Psalm 78 : 58-64 Matthew 18 : 21 - 19 : 1

The theme of reconciliation continues in today's Gospel reading. When you read the parable, whose shoes do you place yourself in? How does the story look different if you imagine it from the perspective of someone else? Offer to God those things that you find it hard to forgive, and ask for God's help with them.

Friday 14th August

Psalm 118 : 14-18 Matthew 19 : 3-12

In marriage, two people commit to making themselves utterly vulnerable to one another. As this reading testifies, whether one marries or does not, relationships with are often challenging, and sometimes break down. How might the readings from earlier in the week help us read this passage? What relationships in your life – with other people, with God, or perhaps with yourself – do you need to be paying attention to?

Saturday 15th August (Blessed Virgin Mary)

Psalm 45 : 10-end Luke 1 : 46-55

The Revd Broderick Greer calls this beautiful song "Mary's rebel anthem" as it paints a picture of defiance of injustice and inequality in favour of the coming Kingdom. Reading it slowly reminds me of the promises of Jesus to turn the world order on its head in favour of those most marginalised, and of the words of St Laurence we read at the start of the week. As you reflect on this rebel anthem, ask God for courage to play your part in upending unjust structures.

17th – 22nd August *compiled by Janice Wones (Reader)*

Monday 17th August

Psalm 78 : 1 - 8 Matthew 19 : 16 – 22

Which of the ten commandments did Jesus not ask the man about? Consider when and in what ways you have not respected God's name; have not set aside time of him; have valued possessions or money or some other person above him.
"They would not be like their forefathers … whose hearts were not loyal to God."

Tuesday 18th August

Psalm 107 : 1 – 3, 40, 43 Matthew 19 : 23 – 30

Consider what you have given up for your faith. Think of the extra things that you have thought and said and done for God. You are promised that you will receive a reward. But do not expect it to be as you imagine it to be.
"Consider the great love of the Lord."

Wednesday 19th August

Psalm 23 Matthew 20 : 1 -16

How long have you been a believer? Did you go to church as a child? Were you taught your first prayers as a toddler? Remember the gift of grace and salvation that has been given to you will be no more and no less than to any other Christian.
"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life."

Thursday 20th August

Psalm 51 : 7 – 12 Matthew 22 : 1 – 14

Do you think that you have been invited to the banquet in the Kingdom of God? Or are you one who was gathered in unexpectedly? Have you got your wedding clothes ready? Have you repented? Have you tried to live a righteous life? Have you done all the good that you could?
"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Friday 21st August

Psalm 107 : 1 – 8 Matthew 22 : 34 – 40

You have heard these verses so many times that they may go in one ear and out the other. Try to stop and think what it really means to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Now recognise how far you fall short.
"Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love."

Saturday 22nd August

Psalm 85 : 7 -13 Matthew 23 : 1 – 12

Do you have a position of any authority – parent, teacher, employer, supervisor, manager? Beware! Make sure that you live up to the standards that you expect of others. If you fail to do the best you can, others may disregard your instructions and copy what you do.
"Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."