

Reflection

Today's readings all refer to the Jewish law, but have very different views about it! In the Deuteronomy passage Moses tells the Israelites that the law they have been given by God is more just than any other, and they must observe it diligently. By contrast in the Gospel Jesus criticises the Pharisees for relying too much on following the letter of that law rather than its spirit. And finally James in his letter looks toward "the perfect law, the law of liberty". So what are we called to do?

Human lives are complex, and attempts to give precise instructions that work in all situations frequently fail, as we have seen during the covid lockdowns (why could I not visit an elderly relative but a cleaner could? Is a scotch egg really a full meal?). The Pharisees' error was not that they took pleasing God and being acceptable to him seriously (we all should do that), but that they went about it the wrong way. They concentrated on the details (of washing hands and utensils, in this case) instead of the bigger picture (being motivated by generosity and love). It's as if someone thought that loving their spouse only meant buying them a bunch of flowers on specific occasions rather than continually sharing times of joy and tenderness with them, and supporting them in times of trouble.

Pleasing the Lord by following the "law of liberty" involves imagination, empathy and a willingness to take chances when called to do so. That can seem harder than "ticking the boxes" of a detailed regulation, but it brings us closer to the Lord and, guided by his spirit within us, lets us share his loving heart.

Ian Totterdell, Churchwarden



Codes for the Zoom worship at 6pm

These are codes for Sundays from 04.07.21 until the end of August

Meeting ID: 859 7288 7300

Passcode: 605760

Telephone numbers (unchanged) 0203 051 2874, 0203 481 5237, 0203 481 5240, 0131 460 1196

NEXT SUNDAY 05.09.2021 14th Sunday after Trinity

SERVICES 10.30am in Church, 6pm by Zoom

READINGS OT Isaiah 35: 4-7a
NT James 2: 1-10, (11-13), 14-17
GOSPEL Mark 7: 24-end



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St Thomas, Exeter

Sunday 29th August 2021

13th Sunday after Trinity

10.30am Mass in Church

6pm via Zoom

So what does the **new normal** begin to look like? Firstly a resuming of mid-morning Sunday Mass as you know, and a return to sharing some 'chat time' afterwards with tea and coffee etc—but for this to continue there will need to be **more volunteers**: please speak to Ian in the first instance. Then there is a BCP Eucharist on Wednesday mornings at 10 o'clock. We are having active discussion about Sunday evenings, with at least a zoom service of Evening Worship once a month (probably the 1st Sunday of the month), and at some point a monthly Healing Service. Sunday early mornings and another weekday Mass are also possible but with no plans as yet. The Walsingham Cell is also thinking about how to move forward. The key here I think is 'piano piano' as the Italians say, slowly slowly, not rushing anything. Suffice it to say, I am delighted to see new old faces, and new new faces each week.

And we are re-starting Baptisms too—so a particular welcome to **Myles George**, who is to be baptized today and his parents Stephen and Corinna.

Fr David



Collect

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-9

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

James 1: 17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not

merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Mark 7: 1-8, 14, 15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.' Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. 'For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

Post Communion

God our creator, you feed your children with the true manna, the living bread from heaven: let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage until we come to that place where hunger and thirst are no more; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

NOTICES

Just to underline the new pattern of Sunday worship: Mass in Church at 10.30, and an online Zoom service of Evening Worship at 6pm, codes overleaf. Mask wearing is still advised by the Church of England for services in church.

Theatre Alibi are having another exhibition *We are St Thomas* 9th-12th September, 10am-4pm daily at Emmanuel Hall.

Coffee and tea will be offered after the 10.30am Mass. It will be served from the Servedy in the North Transept. If the weather is good, there will be seats outside the North Transept to gather for fellowship. If the weather is poor, we will serve in the Nave. **Volunteers required to make the coffee/tea on a rota system.**

House Group. On holiday until September!

Community Larder The Community Larder will be collecting on **Tuesdays** from 10am-12noon. The collecting point is in the Choir Vestry via the Tower door. Please continue to be generous.

Knit and Natter *Update for August 2021* We have decided unanimously to meet weekly on Thursdays in St Thomas Pleasure Ground, from 10.30 to 12 noon. If it's wet, at 19 Maple Road. All details from Jenny on 01392 498725.

Ladies Lunch 28th August 12.30pm at The Royal Oak, Okehampton Street.

Mailing the Pew Sheet This will be the last pewsheets to be posted out for general circulation. We will provide these in church on Sunday mornings as previously, and continue to mail to those in residential homes.