

will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the LORD's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever." Isaiah 55: 10-13

God will provide and we in faith will respond!

If you are able to join the Ecumenical Service on our
Common this morning the theme being explored is that
of the parable of the hidden treasure and the Pearl ~
Matthew 13: 44-46 two verses that express so much and are
essentially about looking and seeing and hearing and
listening though neither are actually mentioned! What is
talked about is discovery and our response to what we
discover. Faith is a precious gift that when we discover it
has a 'must have' quality so we give ourselves ~all we have
to gain it ~ we give ourselves to Christ ~ then what do we
do? Well only you can answer that completely ~but God
already knows! Amen.



Ministry Musings (16th July 2017)

"Whoever has ears let them hear"

Do you ever feel that you have a problem with your hearing or someone that you think should be listening does not appear to be doing so?

I am sure that God is prompting the right people for the right ministries at Immanuel and we are very grateful to those who have heard our pleas for Churchwardens and PCC membership and have discovered that they cannot give 100 % commitment at this time. We all agree that making the wrong appointments is inappropriate for both those appointed and the church.

Our experience here at Immanuel is that God richly blesses us in our pilgrimage with Him so this period of waiting seems particularly hard and frustrating! Today's Gospel affirms for us it is right to be patient and wait on God but that does depend on us listening to His prompting and not ignoring it! It is clearly confirmed that if we plant on the path or rocky ground we will fail so we need to well but we need the seed! By our APCM next year that seed will not just be for Churchwardens and PCC members but for a new treasurer as well. We need to learn to listen and understand how God requires us to move forward. Paul writes that

"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"

We do not want anyone to respond to our pleas through feeling guilty however Isaiah gives a prophecy that tells us the Word that comes from God is not returned to Him empty but will accomplish what He desires, enabling us to

"Go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

That sadly feels a little removed at the minute as we try to share the load that enables ministry to take place! As vicar, without the support of the other ministries, I recognise the path to 'burn out' is one of the potential turns in the journey that by God's Grace needs avoiding as we continue in our ~

Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known

Isaiah 55: 10-13 OT page 696 Romans 8:1-11 NT page 153
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NT page 13

Our Lord knew that one of our human failings is that we hear things said to us but that we do not listen to what is said! In the same way we read a book but we skim words or see what we expect to and it can be quite a surprise to discover exactly what is printed on the page. If you use social media quite often there are posts that start

‘fi ouy nac daer siht’

where the letters are either jumbled or completely backwards and the majority of us read it as if nothing were wrong! We discover that it is a real discipline to hear and listen or to read and see what is there for us and we discover just how hard our brains work without us realising and how blessed we are! Sadly, illness, injury or simply old age can rob us of the disciplines and skills of listening and seeing clearly and that is a frightening experience to go through which needs loving support and encouragement to deal with it. What a shame that we do not always realise the blessings that God gives us until we realise we are losing them! Jesus says as He teaches His disciples

“Whoever has ears, let them hear”, Matthew 13: 9

which we note comes at the end of the telling of the parable of the sower; situation and circumstance are things that we can often have some control over ~ and when that is possible we should take responsibility for it and cherish the opportunities we are given ~ not waste them or take them for granted!

But we do waste opportunities and shirk responsibilities ! Thankfully we are reminded in Paul's writing to the church in Rome that

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are

in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” Romans *: 1-2

That reassurance begins with “therefore”, so we need to look back and see what Paul has just been writing about, ~ It transpires he is commenting on the transforming Love if God in those who follow and accept Jesus but also about the reality of just how difficult that can be when trying to live within the world with its laws and misunderstand God's Love and how believers often find that we do what we do not want to do~ how the worlds rules and regulations work in contradiction to God's but somehow seem stronger or easier to follow ~ so that all our intention to live by God's Law is at risk of being overpowered by the Law of the land!

But God's love and understanding is constant ~ He knows that His Word will not return to Him empty~ but it will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sends it to us! We read again the prose of Isaiah in the words of prophecy that he is given about this ~

“As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower
and bread for the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills