

St. Mary's Church Cubbington



Trinity 1
Sunday June 14th

Sunday Message 14th June 2020

Hello once again and greetings from the vicarage.

This is becoming a bit of a habit, but one which I hope is helping during this rather difficult time.

As I look back over the last few Sundays, we have celebrated several feast days – even if it was in our own home.

Since the church closed we have missed a fair amount –

The latter part of Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday.

And so that means that now we come to what is known in the church calendar as Ordinary Time.

I don't think we could ever describe this time as ordinary!

You have probably heard on the news that churches can open from this coming Monday.

I heard the announcement first from the BBC, then I listened to the Prime Minister and then a day later the diocese signposted me to the National Churches website where I read it for myself.

However, It might not be quite what you or I were expecting.

From Monday places of worship can if they want open for **Private Individual Prayer** – this is further explained in the guidance as 'a single person entering a church to pray on their own.'

I have decided with the agreement of the PCC that we will open St. Mary's each day from 10.00am until 2.00pm to begin with.

In order for us to open we have had to follow strict guidelines laid down by the National Church with regards to cleaning and the setting up the building.

Those wishing to enter for private prayer will find that only the front two pews are available, and they are asked to be aware of social distancing along with the recommended hand cleaning.

I know that this is not how we are used to seeing and using St. Mary's but as RC Bishop of London said "It is better to see the churches open even if there are restrictions than locked up."

Before we move to this Sunday's readings on Friday the church remembered the Apostle Barnabas and the appointed Gospel reading is from John's Gospel chapter 15 verses 12 to 17.

You will all recognise this passage as it is usually read on Remembrance Sunday.

Barnabas is one of the apostles that's not mentioned as much as some of the others, but he was the one who sold one of his fields and gave the money to the apostles for those in need.

He was well respected by his fellow apostles and they asked him to go on a mission and check out the rumours that non-Jews were converting to Christianity.

His trip took him two weeks travelling 300 miles to Antioch.



Christianity began as a Jewish movement and many thought that the converts needed to obey the Jewish Laws of circumcision and kosher food.

Barnabas reported back, that many Gentiles were believers and enjoying God's favour without the need to obey the Jewish rules.

Barnabas became a minister in Antioch and when the numbers grew, he appointed St. Paul as an associate.

The church supported St. Paul's missionary trips, Barnabas accompanied St Paul on his first trip to Cyprus and then on to Turkey.

First missionary stop of Barnabas and Paul was the scenic island of Cyprus, Barnabas' homeland.



Barnabas had a compassion for the outsider.

The passage from John chapter 15 is all about Jesus teaching the people to love and care for each other.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Barnabas went on in the same light of Christ telling others not only to believe in Jesus but also to love like Jesus had.

One of my favourite verses in the bible is verse 16 which says **“You did not choose me but I chose you”**

I like to think that I and all of us are chosen just like the first disciples were chosen – and God chooses each of us for a particular reason.

God chose Barnabas to go to the non-Jewish people and spread His word.

Throughout my rather long period of discernment over what God wanted me to do, -

I repeated that short verse again and again as a reminder that whatever I was being called to – if I was being called - was not my decision but Gods.

Telling myself this made me much more relaxed about the whole process.

I also reminded God (as if He needed reminding) that when things were beyond me, as they often were – if He really had got something in mind for me – I needed help.

It is very encouraging knowing that help is at hand and all you have to do is ask – and sometimes you don't even have to ask.

This is true for all of us, as it says in verse 14 **“You are my friends if you do what I command”**

Jesus is our friend and He commands us to love each other as He loves us.

There have been great examples of Love shown during this difficult time - but there has also been lots of acts of hatred especially over this last week.

We are to Love each other as Jesus Loved us, and He Loved us enough to give His life for us.

Maybe think about someone who needs this kind of Love today.

Barnabas' friend Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 13 tells us all about Love,

that's why most wedding couples chose it for their marriage service.

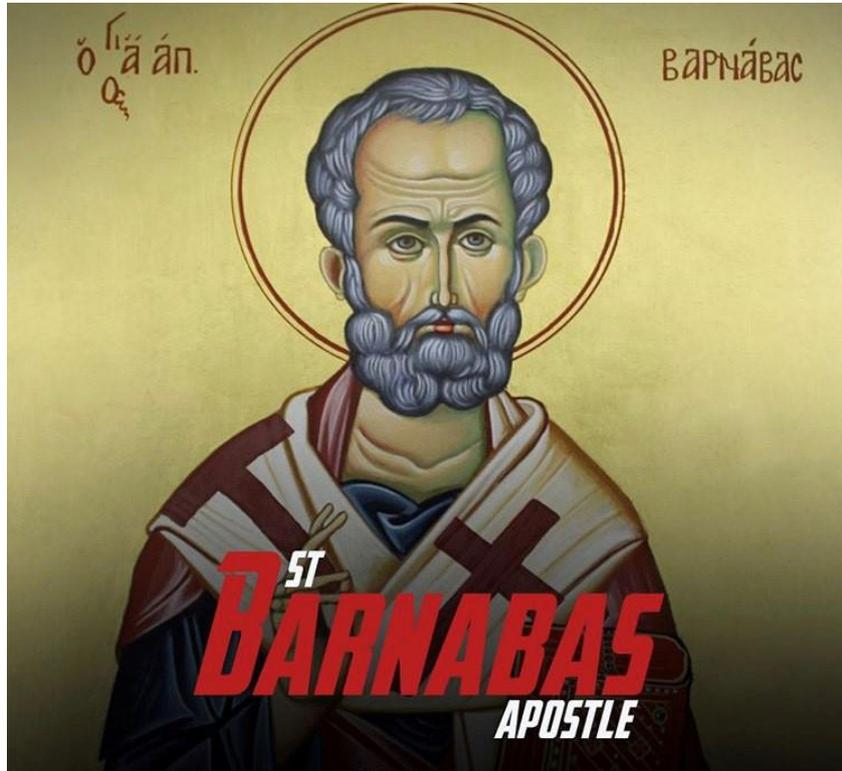


I seem to have only focused on the gospel for Barnabas, but it does have a wonderful message and it's all about love.

Forgive me if I've mentioned love a lot, but Thursday was my 37th wedding anniversary.

Finally, Love is a most wonderful gift given by God – so let's all use it.



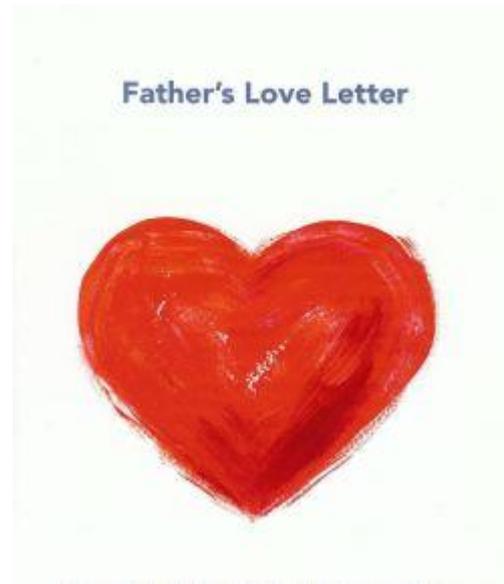


The Collect for Barnabas the Apostle

Bountiful God, giver of all gifts
who poured your Spirit upon your servant Barnabas
and gave him grace to encourage others;
help us, by his example,
to be generous in our judgements
and unselfish in our service;
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

This was given to me many years ago when I was on a retreat at Offa House. My copy is in the form of a scroll with illustrations but the words are the same.

A cry of a Father's heart from Genesis to Revelation.



FATHER'S LOVE LETTER

MY CHILD,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you (**Psalm 139.1**)

I know when you sit down and when you rise up (**Psalm 139.2**)

I am familiar with all your ways (**Psalm 139.3**)

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered (**Matthew 10.29-31**)

For you were made in my image (**Genesis 1.27**)

In me you live and move and have your being (**Acts 17.28**)

For you are my offspring (**Acts 17.28**)

I knew you even before you were conceived (**Jeremiah 1.4-5**)

I chose you when I planned creation (**Ephesians 1.11-12**)

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book
(**Psalm 139.15-16**)

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live
(**Acts 17.26**)

You are fearfully and wonderfully made (**Psalm 139.14**)

I knit you together in your mother's womb (**Psalm 139.13**)

And brought you forth on the day you were born (**Psalm 71.6**)

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me
(**John 8.41-44**)

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love
(**1 John 4.16**)

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you (**1 John 3.1**)

Simply because you are my child and I am your Father (**1 John 3.1**)

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could (**Matthew 7.11**)

For I am the perfect father (**Matthew 5.48**)

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand (**James 1.17**)

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs (**Matthew 6.31-33**)

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope
(**Jeremiah 29.11**)

Because I love you with an everlasting love (**Jeremiah 31.3**)

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore...

(Psalms 139.17-18)

And I rejoice over you with singing **(Zephaniah 3.17)**

I will never stop doing good to you **(Jeremiah 32.40)**

For you are my treasured possession **(Exodus 19.5)**

I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul

(Jeremiah 32.41)

And I want to show you great and marvellous things **(Jeremiah 33.3)**

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me **(Deuteronomy 4.29)**

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart **(Psalm 37.4)**

For it is I who gave you those desires **(Philippians 2.13)**

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine

(Ephesians 3.20)

For I am your greatest encourager **(2 Thessalonians 2.16-17)**

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles

(2 Corinthians 1.3-4)

When you are broken-hearted, I am close to you **(Psalm 34.18)**

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart

(Isaiah 40.11)

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes **(Revelation 21.3-4)**

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth

(Revelation 21.3-4)

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus

(John 17.23)

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed **(John 17.26)**

He is the exact representation of my being **(Hebrews 1.3)**

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you

(Romans 8.31)

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins **(2 Corinthians 5.18-19)**

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled

(2 Corinthians 5.18-19)

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you **(1 John 4.10)**

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love

(Romans 8.31-32)

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me **(1 John 2.23)**

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again

(Romans 8.38-39)

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen

(Luke 15.7)

I have always been Father, and will always be Father

(Ephesians 3.14-15)

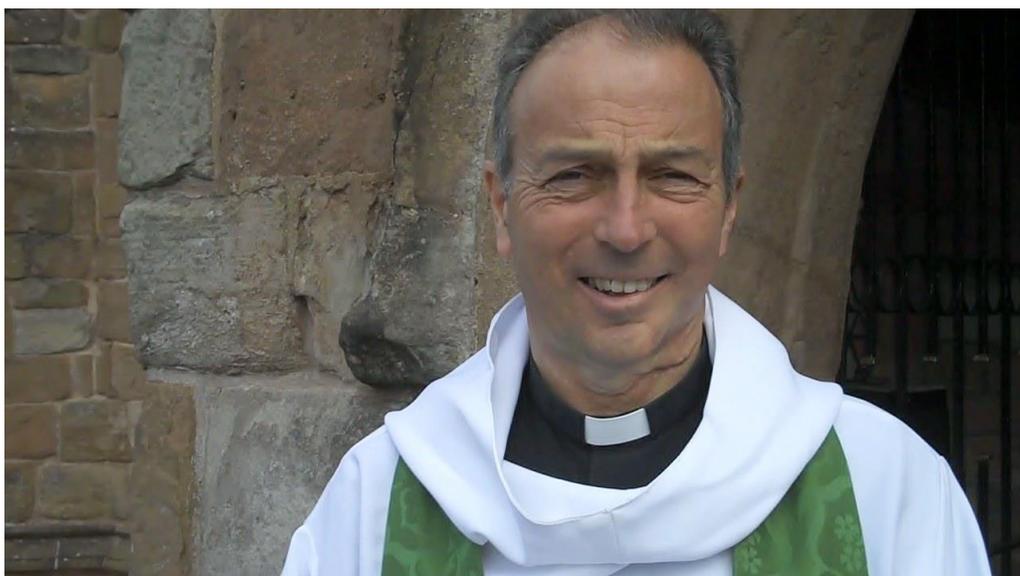
My question is "Will you be my child?" **(John 1.12-13)**

I am waiting for you **(Luke 15.11-32)**

Love, Your Dad

Almighty God

Reverend Graham



Something to think about

- I've told you one of my favourite bible verses, what's yours and why?
- What does it feel like when Jesus says, "You are my friend if you do what I command you"?
- What do you think Jesus is commanding you to do?
- What do you think Jesus is commanding St. Mary's to do?
- We have seen lots of acts of hatred this last week, do you allow these acts to get in the way of you loving your neighbour?
- Does your faith help/hinder you when you see such evil?
- In what way could you respond to such evil?



LOVE

is patient

is kind

it does not envy

it does not boast

it is not proud

it is not rude

it is not self-seeking

it is not easily angered

keeps no record of wrongs

does not delight in evil

Rejoices with the truth

always protects

always trusts

always hopes

always perseveres

Never Fails



For any of your family, friends
and neighbours
who have access to the internet,
you might like to suggest
that they look at the church's website
where they will be able to see this
message and other useful information.

Also, anyone you know with
Primary Age school children will find
stories from 'Open The Book'.

Tell them to Google
St. Mary's Church Cubbington.