

# NEWSLETTER

for the Churches of St Arvans, St Mary, Penterry,  
St Deiniol, Itton, St James, Devauden & Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg  
forming part of the Severn Wye Ministry Area

## IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open during the day both for worship and private prayer, Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, Holy Communion may once again be received in both kinds, although there is, of course, no obligation to do so.

Our live-streamed services are as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10. a.m., and a reflection & celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. They can be accessed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook here:

<https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/>

and are available to watch at any time

The St Arvans Parish website can be found here:

<http://www.starvanschurch.org.uk/>

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support  
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**24<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
**The Sixteenth Sunday**  
**after Trinity**  
*Proper 20 A*

## The Collect

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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

## A reading from the book of Jonah

When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their

left, and also many animals?'

[3. 10 - 4. 11]

*Reader / This is the Word of the Lord*  
*Response / Thanks be to God*

## Psalm 145 1 - 8

**R/ The Lord is near  
to those who call upon him**

I will exalt you, O God my King,  
and bless your name  
for ever and ever.  
Every day will I bless you  
and praise your name  
for ever and ever.

**R/ The Lord is near  
to those who call upon him**

Great is the Lord and greatly  
to be praised;  
there is no end to his greatness.  
One generation shall praise  
your works to another  
and shall declare your power.

**R/ The Lord is near  
to those who call upon him**

I will ponder the glorious splendour  
of your majesty  
and all your marvellous works.  
They shall speak of the might  
of your wondrous acts,  
and I will tell of your greatness.

**R/ The Lord is near  
to those who call upon him**

They shall publish the remembrance  
of your great goodness;  
they shall sing  
of your righteous deeds.  
The Lord is gracious  
and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.

**R/ The Lord is near  
to those who call upon him**

## **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians [1; 21-30]**

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well – since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

*Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord*  
*Response / Thanks be to God*

### **Gradual Hymn**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Open our heart, O Lord  
to accept the words of your Son  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

Hear the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

**J**esus said to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-

place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

*[St Matthew 20.1-16]*

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
**Praise to you, O Christ**

### **A Prayer of Spiritual Communion**

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament.  
I love you above all things,  
and I long for you in my soul.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.  
As though you have already come,  
I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.  
*(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)*

## **For Your Prayers**

For the Church, that we may also proclaim and show by our way of living God's love and mercy

For a successful harvest and for all who work in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and in the fishing industry.

Those who suffer as a result of the climate emergency

For responsible stewardship of our planet  
For compassion and responsibility in those elected to govern us.

The people of Ukraine

For migrants & refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands

### **For the Church:**

For the bishops of the Church:  
Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.

All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians

For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

For the Severn Wye Ministry Area, for its priests, licensed lay ministers and all its people.

### **For the Sick & those in need:**

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Elisabeth; Michael; Lisa; Anne-Louise; Helen; Abigail; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece; Margaret

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time:  
Anne Morgan; Nancy Bull; Mary Impanni

## **The Jereboam Interview**

*We continue our series of extracts from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.*

*Our thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'*

# Nahum

**Jereboam:** Oh hello, Nahum. Might I ask you something about that letter they've just read out, please?

**Nahum:** By all means...I can't guarantee to be able to answer your question though.

**Jereboam:** Well, Paul talks about looking forward to the time when he leaves this world.

**Nahum:** Yes...

**Jereboam:** I thought that your faith was very physical. You know -- Jesus came into the world physically, you receive him physically in the Eucharist, and so on. Yet I sensed that Paul might be rejecting the physical world to some extent. He didn't actually say so: I just wondered. It somehow felt a bit different from what the Church usually says.

**Nahum:** I doubt that it was different really. He's merely saying that life isn't ideal, which we all know anyway.

**Jereboam:** I suppose that I'm really saying that the letter reminded me of my own experience. When I am at my most spiritual, I often feel as if my body is hardly there. Do you know what I mean?

**Nahum:** Oh, yes: I think that many of us search for the spiritual away from our physical lives. You can easily forget your body altogether. There's nothing wrong with that. Your body's still there.

**Jereboam:** My problem is that I often become so far removed from my physical self, that I barely seem to know who I am any more. And then I seem to be so changeable. It's as if I become different people when I'm in different company or speaking different languages. Maybe that doesn't count as a spiritual matter, but it's quite disconcerting.

**Nahum:** You know, I think everybody feels that to some extent.

**Jereboam:** Really?

**Nahum:** Yes, I think so. Can I offer you two pieces of advice?

**Jereboam:** Of course.

**Nahum:** First of all, tell someone all about it in as much detail as you can. You should find that a good friend can appreciate all the aspects of you, and your problem won't seem like a problem any more.

**Jereboam:** As long as I choose the right person...

**Nahum:** Absolutely right. Confiding in the wrong person can be a disaster! We've probably all learnt that one the hard way.

**Jereboam:** And the second piece of advice?

**Nahum:** All right -- shut your eyes.

**Jereboam:** Yes...

**Nahum:** Now take your left hand and touch your right shoulder...that's it!

Perfect: well done! You knew exactly where to touch.

**Jereboam:** Of course.

**Nahum:** Well, think about it. All sorts of things affect our thoughts and perceptions. Lots of them we can't understand, let alone control. But wherever we are, whoever we think we are, we can still do what you just did -- find a part of our body just by intuition. It's a significant part of our sense of identity. When you feel disorientated, try it. You might find it reassuring.

**Jereboam:** Now I really didn't expect to be told about that... Thank you. These tiles are lovely, Nathan. Did you say they're for the people in that new house?

## Thought for the Week

"Faith is not a light that dispels all our darkness but a lamp that guides our steps at night and that is enough for the road."

## THIS WEEK

On Sunday we hear the parable about the landlord who represents God's way of caring for us. Though workers go out into his vineyard at various times of the day, he pays them all the same. When they grumble, he simply explains that he desires to be generous. How this can change our view of God and our own sense of justice?

This week on Wednesday we celebrate the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul, priest, Friday is the Feast of Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel and Saint Raphael, archangels, and on Saturday we remember Saint Jerome, priest and doctor of the Church.

The first readings at the Eucharist this week come from the Book of Ezra, one of the first chroniclers of the post-exile period of Judaism. He is responsible for helping hold the restored people together. We finish the week with brief selections from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who were prophets during this period.

"Consider your ways!" "My spirit continues in your midst; do not fear!"

In St Luke's Gospel, Jesus urges us to use our gifts: "No one lights a lamp and hides it under a bushel basket." When his family comes looking for him, Jesus uses the occasion to tell us that we are family to him, if we hear his Word and act on it. Herod is wondering who Jesus really is. He encourages his Apostles to freedom, sending them out to teach and heal, taking nothing with them. Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is. Peter replies for them all, "The Christ of God." Jesus doesn't want them to announce he's the type of Messiah they were looking for. Instead, he tells them of his upcoming passion and death.

**Next Sunday** we hear Paul exhorting the Philippians, "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus," offering us a powerful image of Jesus' humble, selfless service. In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus offers a story about two sons, one who agrees to work in the vineyard but doesn't; the other who tells his father he will not work but then quietly goes to work. It is a story that challenges the chief priests and elders of the people, "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you."

## A homily for Trinity 16

+ The novelist Graham Greene wrote this in his novel Brighton Rock, that complex morality tale of good and evil, right and wrong, and a human nature which so often seen beyond redemption - he says this: "*You can't conceive, nor can I, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God,*" Very often the ways of God are mysterious and unfathomable. In the face of what appears to be senseless violence, meaningless tragedy, of inexplicable and disturbing events of all kinds, I suppose we could say that we take refuge in words like this which both express our inability to understand how such things could

happen, whilst holding on to our belief that ultimately a God of love presides over a universe where all things will somehow work for good. We struggle throughout our lives - and actually I don't think it gets easier - with balancing those two seemingly contradictory ideas, because we feel that things should be just, fair and capable of a straightforward and satisfactory explanation. Some might say that this in-built feeling is itself an indication - at least a bit of a hint - of the existence of God, who has made us in his own image.

Yet - we are still forced back to that cliché: God's ways are not our ways - and not as a cop-out or an evasion, to hide our lack of understanding, but as a simple statement of the way things are: clichés most often are.

There is no sense of economy or human appropriateness or proportion in God's mercy. Christ tells us that it isn't enough to forgive seven times. Instead it must be seventy-seven times, or seventy times seven, it doesn't really matter how we translate that so long as we are given a sense of the vast gulf between what we think is possible and what God actually does. We have heard all these parables over these weeks of summer and early autumn: the kingdom of heaven is where our sins, and the alienation which is part and parcel of our fallen human nature, are forgiven without limit or restriction - here we are given a glimpse - a blinding flash of light - of the reality of Greene's phrase: "*the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God.*"

So, this morning we are brought up short by the strange parable of the workers in the vineyard.

This, too, Our Lord says to us, is what God is like. And, again, our first reaction is one of incredulity - what on earth can he mean by this? It's a story which offends our own limited and restricted view of fairness.

Now we don't need to say that when Jesus makes use of parables in this way, he is always doing so in a non-literal way. It goes without saying, God isn't the owner of a vineyard, and Jesus isn't talking here about labour relations or the nature of a just society, he's speaking about our

relationship with God. He's saying that whatever we receive from God is by way of being a radically free gift - our expectations or ideas of what might be *owed* to us, whatever they might be, haven't the slightest relevance here, they make no sense.. In relation to God what "rights" can we be said to have? Having said that, before we lapse into a kind of reactionary pessimism, the message that comes over from St Matthew's account of the parable is quite reassuring. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, isn't a capricious ruler of the universe, handing out rewards or punishments according to the whim of the moment. There is no question in the story we've just heard of the owner of the vineyard somehow measuring what anyone deserves. The question of payment or rewards handed out to those who work in his vineyard is simply a question of how generous he is. This story is about the nature of God, and the unlimited nature of divine love and mercy. The Gospels are full of these stories of God's generosity: the loaves and fishes feeding thousands of people, the wine provided at the marriage at Cana, the indication that forgiveness should be almost without limit and so on. And the greatest of all is the mystery of the cross - the mystery which stands at the very heart of the nature of God - Christ's giving of his life for us in order to penetrate the deepest anguish and hurt of humanity's alienation from God and to redeem us and bring us home. So we are being reminded here in this parable, which seems at first to be about our daily work, that our faith - our salvation itself - stands or falls by the unlimited generosity, mercy and love of the Father, and it is not for us to try to place any limits of our own upon his generosity. For whereas human gifts are often things we come to expect - sometimes justifiably - as a right, the Father's *divine* gift in giving us his Son is greater than anything we could expect or imagine. The shock or the scandal of the Incarnation and its fulfilment upon the hill of Calvary is something we should never forget, and the gift we are given as a result is

something we should never take for granted.

So, despite the fact that we might be tempted on a surface reading or a superficial hearing of Our Lord's parable of the labourers in the vineyard to sympathise with the complaints from those who, from dawn, worked in the day's heat and who were shocked to find that the workers who started at 5 o'clock received the exact same pay, we should suspend our judgement. So, this story Jesus tells isn't about a fair day's pay for a fair day's work or anything like that. It's nothing to do with workers' rights or the principles of fairness and justice we should quite rightly apply to our dealings with one another. The Christian faith and Christian moral theology has a lot to say about the necessity for fairness and justice in our dealings with one another, things which our society should listen to a great deal more than it is at the moment, but that's not what is being spoken of here.

Today's Gospel parable isn't about justice at all but about salvation and the outpouring of God's love. All who are faithfully part of Christ, all who work in the Lord's vineyard, will receive "the usual daily pay" - that is, eternal life, life in all its fullness. With God there are no half measures, there is no such thing as a half-share or a quarter-share in salvation. And, most importantly, salvation isn't ours because we expect it, or because we deserve it or think we deserve it, but simply because we are loved by God. Yes, even you and me - we are all recipients of this appalling strangeness of the mercy of God," +

## **St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat**

2.30-4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms  
Everyone Welcome

## **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October**

*And every second Saturday  
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift  
please ring Diane on 628084

## **Services in our Churches:**

### **TODAY:**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2023:**

**The 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
Hymns (*New English Hymnal*)

475; 359; 420; 190

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St Deiniol's, Itton

3 p.m. 3 p.m. A Harvest Thanksgiving  
Service at Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg

*Please note: The 9 a.m. daily  
Eucharist will resume this week on  
Tuesday following Fr Michael's return  
from pilgrimage on the Camino de  
Santiago.*

### **NEXT SUNDAY**

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2023:**

**The 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

9 a.m. Family Service at Devauden

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St Mary's, Penterry

Readings at the Eucharist:

*Ezekiel 18. 1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25. 1-9;*

*Philippians 2. 1-13; St Matthew 21. 23-32*

## **What's On**

**St James Church, Devauden  
invites you to**

**Sponsor a Slate**

to help much needed roof repairs.

£10 per slate. Forms available from  
Devauden Village Shop.

Please help to preserve this wonderful  
listed building.

**The Severn Wye Ministry  
Area Prayer Group meets  
each Thursday at 7.30 p.m.  
In one of our churches  
All are welcome!**

**28<sup>th</sup> September**

St. Andoenus, Mounton

**5<sup>th</sup> October:** St. Peter's  
Church, Newchurch

**12<sup>th</sup> October:** St. Tewdric's  
Church, Mathern

**19<sup>th</sup> October:** St. Thomas a  
Becket's Church,  
Shirenewton

**26<sup>th</sup> October:** St. Thomas a  
Becket's Church,  
Shirenewton

**2<sup>nd</sup> November:**

St. Arvan's Church

**9<sup>th</sup> November:** St. Tewdric's  
Church, Mathern

*Future dates to follow ....*

## **Ministry Area Prayer**

**D**ear Lord,

we thank you for the opportunity  
to work together as a Ministry Area.

May we engage with each other  
with faith and encouragement.

May we manage each situation  
with wisdom and mutual respect.

May we serve with integrity,  
creativity and purpose.

May we speak with openness  
and gentleness.

May we offer our gifts, time  
and finances with generosity.

May we face each challenge  
with courage and the desire  
to grow through it.

May we all be drawn deeper  
into our relationship with you

and be known as your disciples.

Help us to show your love, proclaim

your Good News and grow your Kingdom  
in this place.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,  
our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**

## ***A Prayer for Ukraine***

*written by Ukrainian Christians*

**O** Lord our God, look down with  
mercy on the Ukrainian people.  
Protect and save them from the unjust  
aggressors who seek to subdue them.  
Grant them steadfast trust in your  
mercy and protection.

O Mother of God, who gave us your  
miraculous icon at Zarvanytsia,  
intercede for the Ukrainian people,  
who run to the shelter of your mercy  
in their times of need.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on  
us. Grant peace and protection to the  
people of Ukraine. Give them strength  
and courage to defend what is good,  
right, and holy. Keep them safe from  
harm and provide for all their needs,  
both temporal and spiritual.

Hear our prayers, O Lord, and deliver  
us from distress, for You are merciful  
and compassionate and love mankind.  
To you we give glory: the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**