

BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

5th March 2023

The Second Sunday of Lent

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Ross, Gaynor, Toni and Eric Kent, Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, Chris, Lynne Riddlestone, Olive Robinson, Harry Scorer, Kath Finkill, Barbara Cooper, Maureen Simpson, Harry Lillystone, and Pauline.

RIP

Virginia Finkill, and Chris Hall
May they rest in peace and rise in glory

Praying for Edwin in Bolivia

Please pray for Edwin and all of Latin America, as cases of coronavirus are on the rise.

COLLECT AND READINGS

Collect

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error, the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Genesis 12.1-4a

Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Second Reading - Romans 4.1-5, 13-17

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of

faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations') - in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist

Gospel - John 3.1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty God, you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

Today's readings concentrate on the wideness of God's salvation in Christ, and the calling of a community united under God. The God of Abraham blesses and commits himself to the promises he has made to his people who walk in faith.

Today's readings are about God's commitment to blessing his people and keeping his promises. In two of the texts (Genesis 12.1-4a; Romans 4.1-5, 13-17), the focus is squarely on Abraham, who received God's promise of making a great nation from his family and blessing all people. The other two readings (Psalm 121; John 3.1-17) subtly allude to the Abrahamic promises and tradition. In Psalm 121, Yahweh is found to be trustworthy as the Lord who 'made heaven and earth'. The first appearance of this designation comes from Melchizedek, who proclaims Abraham blessed by

'God Most High, maker of heaven and earth' (Genesis 14.18). The God who chose Abraham is none other than the Creator God and he has promised to preserve and protect him (14.19). In John 3.17, Jesus announces to Nicodemus that God the Father has sent his Son from heaven that the world may be rescued by him – the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that the families of the earth will be blessed by God (see Genesis 12.3).

Old Testament - Genesis 12.1-4a

The movement from Genesis 11 to Genesis 12 is very important. The preceding chapters (especially 3–11) tell the woeful tale of the corruption of God's human creatures that must be destroyed by a great flood and even go on to try to build a high tower to the heavens for the sake of power and greed (Genesis 11.1-9). Chapter 12 commences a new 'chapter' in the Genesis story. While many of the antecedent activities have been ones of punishment and scattering, the Lord now shows his commitment to blessing and uniting – through Abraham. Later on, when this God is referred to as 'the God of Abraham', it should be remembered that what stands behind this encounter is God's commitment to blessing all humanity through him. The apostle Paul must remind his Roman readers (3.29-30) that, because God is One, he is not only the God of the Jews (in Abraham), but of Gentiles and Jews together (through Abraham).

Psalm 121

It is significant that in this Psalm the author is making pilgrimage to the Temple (as inferred from the superscript, A Song of Ascents). In ancient Israelite thought, though the world was God's home, the Temple was especially his place of residence – the axis mundi ('centre of the world'). While many elements of creation are dangerous (e.g. mountain steepness and the sun's heat), the maker of heaven and earth has committed himself to 'keeping' or 'guarding' Israel. The relief of this affirmation is hardly understood apart from the realisation that the gods of the other peoples were often localised, limited in power of nature, required sleep, and did not often make reliable commitments to mortals.

New Testament - Romans 4.1-5,13-17

For the Jews of Paul's time, Abraham was a cherished patriarch whose life demonstrated that he was obedient to God's covenant. In fact, some Jews believed that he literally kept the Mosaic law (which came many centuries later!). Others taught that Abraham would welcome into heaven the Jewish martyrs who kept the law in the face of death. To many sons of Israel, he was the model of covenant-faith – the one who obeyed God through circumcision. By Paul's own time, circumcision (along with other rituals such as Sabbath-keeping and dietary restrictions) was a mark of those who were children of Abraham, and not destined for futility and wickedness (i.e. the Gentiles). In Romans 4, though, Paul re-characterises Abraham, not as the faithful man of circumcision obedience, but the one who demonstrated faith in God's promises even before he began to do God's will. The true heirs of Abraham, then, are not ones who strictly adhere to Torah, but demonstrate faith in God – in these last days through God's Messiah, Jesus.

Gospel - John 3.1-17

This scene at the beginning of John's Gospel contrasts the limited wisdom and perception of the 'ruler' and great teacher of the Jewish Sanhedrin with Jesus, whom the readers of the Gospel know to be the 'ruler' of the kingdom of God (John 18.36). Nicodemus has come to confirm or dispense with the rumours about Jesus' teachings and miracles (3.1). If Jesus is authentic, it would prove that God is 'with him'. The language of the nearness of God leads them into a discussion of how one comes to 'see' the kingdom of God (3.3). Jesus proclaims to the confused leader that one must be 'born again' – the Greek term here also means 'from above', and undoubtedly the ambiguity is intentional. He or she must also be born by water and Spirit. This language probably refers to Jewish eschatological hopes of renewal (see Ezekiel 36.25-27). While Nicodemus may be looking for an inspired teaching, Jesus reveals that the time has come for the kingship of God, but his subjects will need more than human illumination. They require an apocalyptic transformation of the whole self.

Service Times and Venues

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

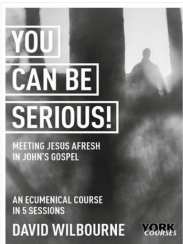
	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16.00—Evensong conference call</i>
5th Mar	8am St Gregory's #	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Gregory's, Bedale *
	9.15am St Gregory's #*F	11am St John's, Leeming #*	
12th Mar	9:15am St Gregory's #*F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #*	Burrill Church *
19th Mar	9:15am St Gregory's #*F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #*	St Mary's Thornton Watlass *
		11am St John's, Leeming #	

Communion * conference call F Facebook

Lent Course

This inspiring York Course on John's Gospel, the most mysterious of all the gospel accounts of the life of Christ, invites us to meet Jesus afresh.

This Lent has an ecumenical feel as we are sharing the material with our friends at Bedale and District Methodist Church. Each week will have three times, three venues and three different days.



Each Monday @ 7.30pm in Bedale and District Methodist Church

Each Tuesday @ 2pm in Chantry Hall

Each Wednesday @ 4pm in the home of Chris Carruthers

Please feel free to move between venues and if you cannot make a particular Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday go along to another day.

LENT LUNCHESES

There will be two Lent Lunches served in Thornton Watlass Village Hall, one on Saturday 11th March and one on Saturday 1st April. Both lunches will be at 12 noon and all money raised will benefit St Mary's Church, Thornton Watlass.



Wensleydale Filling Station

These are monthly meetings where we can celebrate our Christian faith in an informal manner and provide an opportunity to hear more about the love of God for our lives

Thornborough Hall, Moor Road, Leyburn DL8 5AB

Friday 10th February 2023 7.00 – 9.00pm

Speaker : Graham Emerson from Penrith

DONATIONS FOR THE EASTER LILIES

Donations towards the cost of the Easter lilies for St Gregory's Church would be appreciated. Donations can be given to the Parish office; to the church wardens or Rector. Thank you. Christine Isbister.

