

Howrah Sandford Weekly Church Bulletin

SUNDAY SERVICES at St Thomas's Howrah 8.30 and 10 am (both Holy Communion) and St Barnabas's South Arm 10 am (Morning Prayer). All services followed by morning tea, without food.

COVID-SAFE PROCEDURES: hand sanitising, social distancing, recording of attendees, individual cups for communion, no congregational singing yet, books replaced by handouts or projector, online worship option for those who prefer to stay home (go to stthomashowrah.com and click on "Join worship online")

Joy and peace,
Andrew

Sunday 21st June 2020

THEME: Joy

SENTENCE OF SCRIPTURE:

Jesus told his disciples, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." *John 15:11*

BIBLE READINGS:

Job 42: 1-6

Psalms 125

I Peter 1: 6-9

Luke 6: 17-23

LEONIE'S SERMON: Jumping for Joy

Are you jumping for joy? Are you feeling somewhat 'joyful' as the Covid19 restrictions are being lifted? Perhaps you're filled with joy to see your family and friends again – perhaps you feel some trepidation!

Some of you have said good has come out of these restrictions as they have given you time to re-evaluate what you do. It has given you an opportunity to think deeply about what is important to you!

'Joy' is something that seems to keep popping up in my life. I have this magnetic fridge magnet, with Joy written on it. My middle name is Joy. I was named after a much loved Aunty; my daughter's middle name is Joy and my grand daughter's middle name is Joy. The joy I felt following the birth of my first child, after long and complicated delivery, was an overwhelming, indescribable joy. As I looked into her blue eyes and gave thanks to God, I felt my life was complete! I do acknowledge that many mums don't have this experience. I also acknowledge that many things happen in life that cause us grief and pain – we only need to turn on the television at the moment don't we? If you are struggling at the moment, I trust that as we reflect on the words from the Bible today, you will receive the assurance of the joy that has been promised to you, as it has to all believers. The apostle James tells us, 'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you' Jam 4:8. We can be confident that our struggles are never forgotten by the Lord; he keeps our tears in his bottle.

From our letter from Peter this morning, we hear his words of encouragement to new Christians living in what is now modern day Turkey. They were a mixed group of people living in the coastal regions, on the mountain ranges, plateaux, lakes and river systems at a time when it was not easy to be a Christian – it was a time of local harassment and sporadic persecution, a time in which Christians are being warned to prepare for future greater suffering for Christ's sake. Peter's opening words are quite puzzling, he begins: 'In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.' We must remember that these people, from different backgrounds and languages, differing customs and even political histories; these 'chosen and holy people of God' (as Peter refers to them later in his letter 2:9-10;17; 5:9;1:1) are certainly suffering because they are now followers of Jesus. Chapter 4 goes on to speak of the 'fiery ordeal' that was to come.

What I find puzzling is that they are to greatly rejoice. What's that about? Like us, these people had not seen Jesus in person, but Peter had - he knew him, he had witnessed his crucifixion, he saw Jesus' resurrected body. Simon Peter, a fisherman, seeking Silas' help to pen his letter; Peter once called 'Petros' meaning rock - now Jesus' rock, is reminding this mixed group of people, imploring them in fact, to remember that Jesus died for them – and to have courage. Peter reminds them their faith is like gold that has been refined by fire. Their blemishes are being removed;

chipped away. He goes on to say 'Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe - in him'. You may have noticed, as I did when I reflected on this Scripture passage, that Peter's opening words 'In this you greatly rejoice', followed by the word 'your faith is genuine' and the affirmation that they love Jesus now and believe in him now though they can't see him – these words are being spoken in the present tense. These words don't mean they need to rejoice because they are being abused for their faith, but it is because of their faith, they are receiving the salvation of their souls, and can literally jump for joy, giving praise and honour and glory to God now.

There is much written about how to attain joy or happiness in life. I read that the top five components of happiness are:

- (1) Be in possession of the basics — food, shelter, good health, safety.
- (2) Get enough sleep.
- (3) Have relationships that matter to you.
- (4) Take compassionate care of others and of yourself.
- (5) Have work or an interest that engages you.

'Compassion', the Dalai Lama explains, 'is a mental attitude based on the rationale that all human beings have an innate desire to be happy and to overcome suffering, coupled with a desire for others to achieve this as well'. Christian joy (or happiness) is unlike other religions and philosophies. It's a joy which is a gift, and like all God's other gifts, it can be experienced even in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances. I wonder if you have experienced a type of joy that runs deeper than pain or pleasure. It's not because we are simply happy, or glad, like we are when we go on holiday, or purchase a new bike, or a car, or a new surf board – or out of isolation! It's deeper. It's an integral part of our entire relationship to God. It is a joy that comes when there is a deep sense of the presence of God in our life. For many of us, from that awareness, flows the strong desire to share what we are experiencing with others. It is too good to keep for ourselves alone. And this is what we see in each other's faces now you can return to church! For a visitor, this joy may be interpreted as happiness because we are back together again and this is so, however the true joy being experienced is the joy that can only come through the Holy Spirit living within us. Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" Mat 18:20. It is Christ's joy shining through our people.

Jesus has the final word to say about joy: 'I have told you this - so that my joy - may be in you - and that your joy - may be complete'

THE TAKE AWAY: Present and future joy

We who believe in Jesus Christ, God's only son who was crucified for our sins and after 3 days rose from the dead and is living with God at his right hand, live in a future that is already present. Even so - the joy we experience now says Paul, is 'a poor reflection' (1 Corinthians 13:12) compared to what our inheritance will be when we come face to face with Jesus (Revelation 22:4, Matthew 5:8, 1 John 3:2)

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

For our parish Nomination Committee and Bishop working together to find a new Rector.

For Parish Council Task Forces led by Lesley Salter, June Wright and Neil Beechey planning the way forward in these fast-changing times by reassessing weekly worship and communications, connect groups and local outreach.

FROM THE MINISTER:

Volunteers are needed to fill rosters. You are welcome to try something you haven't done before! Some positions need to have Safe Church Communities compliance. Please email me at minister@stthomashowrah.com with your preferred role and service time. Roles include: Bible reading, Children's talk, Cleaning, Flowers, Greeter, Intercessions, Morning Tea, Music, Projector.

'Show Hope', a ministry run through Wellspring Parish supports the many international students who have lost jobs through the Covid pandemic and therefore in most cases currently have no income. A need which has emerged is sanitary products for the women. They are seeking donations of sanitary pads (I am told that this is what the women prefer rather than tampons). Drop them off at church. If you have any questions you can call me Helen Condie on 0412 653 335 or Margaret Savage on 0409 843 756.

With the love of Jesus

Andrew Lake
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