



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 19th November 2023
The Second Sunday before Advent
Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

Email: bockingchurch@gmail.com Call: (01376) 324887 www.stmarys-bocking.com
or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

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|-------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sunday 19th November | 8am | Said Mass | 407 |
| | 10am | Sung Mass | 77 |
| Wednesday 22nd November | 9.30am | Said Mass | 507 (<i>omit vv 2 & 3</i>) |
| Sunday 26th November | 8am | Said Mass | 402 |
| | 10am | Holy Communion with the Induction of Revd Rod, by Archdeacon Kate | |

Panfield Church

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday 19th November | 6pm | Evensong | <i>Keep faithful in my service, says the Lord, and I will give you the crown of righteousness.</i> |
| Tuesday 21st November | 5pm | Evening Prayer/Office Hour | |
| Sunday 26th November | *** No service - all at St Mary's *** | | |

Gospel Acclamation

NOTICES

Christmas Tree Festival - It all starts in 3 weeks, on Saturday 9th December with our Christmas Market event, which means now is the time to get your 'Pound Presents' in to Ann Lanham. We are also looking for items for the 'Tombola'. Instead of a prize draw there will a couple of wonderful hampers, details on what is need for those are at the back of the church. The team on refreshments will also be in need of your support, a list of items needed will be available soon.

Archdeacon Kate - We are really pleased to say that Archdeacon Kate will be leading a Benefice service at St Mary's Bocking on Sunday 26th November at 10am. She will also be collating Revd Rod as Rector of the Benefice. A great opportunity to share all that we are up to, so please don't miss it.

Christmas Concert - On Saturday 2nd December at 7pm there will be a Christmas Concert with Bocking Brass Band in St Mary's, Bocking. This is a free event with a retiring collection, so bring your friends and neighbours for a fabulous festive evening. We are really pleased to also have a number of children from the local school join us for what will be a great concert.

Christmas Postcards - This week our postcards with all our Christmas Services will be back from the printers. We are hoping to get them delivered across the parish. If you can help then please see Fr Rod.

Carols around the Tree - At St Mary's on Sunday 3rd Dec at 3pm there will be carols around the tree led by local brass players. We will also 'switch on' our outdoor Christmas Tree. All welcome.

Advent Course/Stepping Stones - Usually around this time of year we plan an Advent Course, would you be interested in something like this? We know setting time aside is even harder at this time in the year, so maybe a new Stepping Stone course in the New Year might be better? Please let Fr Rod know so that we can put together a plan for the coming months.

Friendly Friday Cafe - is now underway and will run each Friday until December 15th. Sessions start at 12noon and run until 3pm in the Hall. All are very welcome, why not pop down and bring a friend too.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Betty Bloomfield, Gemma Howe, Julie Wilkinson, Barry and Janice Goody, Ron Cole, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, Tony & Ann and Margaret Everitt. We remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind, we pray for the families of Edward Bearman, Dorothy Pickford, Lea Montgomery-Beavis, Elisabeth Wright, Reg Thomas, Alice Fitch, Bob Stiff, and Roger Midgley

The Collect for The Second Sunday before Advent

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Epistle Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 25:14-30

'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground.

Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Address

Knowledge is power. Not a bad saying to live by. I am sure we can all agree that learning all we can is going to stand us in good stead. From history, to science, to literature, to general knowledge and even into practical things too. Knowledge is power. I mean when it comes to changing a plug knowing which one is the live cable and which is the earth, really is power. Brown is live, earth is yellow and green, I think?

While power is knowledge, we can be fooled into thinking we have all the necessary knowledge in certain situations. This reminds me of a funeral I took a good few years ago. I had met the family several times, prepared the Tribute and sent it to them for their agreement. All set.

Well, the funeral started as planned, then during the service I shared the tribute but towards the end of it, completely out of the blue someone got up and said ‘What about me?’ ‘What about my kids?’ Nobody knew this person, it turned out she was a secret daughter, and the deceased had a whole secret family that no-one knew about. Frayed tempers and angry raised voices later, we did eventually re-start. I got through the rest of the funeral unscathed, and I’m glad in many ways to say I haven’t met them since!

Today’s well-known Parable of the Talents falls into this category. For we think we know what it is referring to, but there are some issues with it. Firstly, how much do you think a talent is? A few gold bars? A couple of thousand pounds?

No, a talent is about half a lifetime’s wages, possibly in excess of £1 million. This landowner can give out in total £8 million! He must then be quite the wealthy man that he gives those sorts of sums away, but what a good return he gets. The first two double the return, so he is up to £14 million, then there is the last one burying it and giving a mere £1 million back. Oddly, this really isn’t a parable about money, it has much deeper and important meaning, and so while those in business have jumped on this as a passage that says scripture approves of capitalism, the reality is that they simply do not have enough knowledge to properly understand what it is really trying to tell us.

If it isn’t about money, neither is the passage about the other use of the word talent which is I am sure the sermon you thought you might hear today, and certainly have heard before. That just as we shouldn’t store up money, neither should we bury our talents. While hiding our light under bushel basket is not an extravert’s way to live out our faith, we can do so quietly and still using the skills and talents that God has given us. For me there is power in going about gently following our path rather than shouting it from the rooftops. Living in this way is not wrong, but unfortunately this passage can be used to suggest as much.

For there are also gifts, talents in us that we don’t even know about, so how can we be punished for using what we didn’t realise we had? So this isn’t about burying our talents either. To really understand this parable, we need more knowledge.

For our gospel writers, today Matthew and the community around him, nothing that made it as part of

his gospel is wasted. Each Holy Spirit inspired word, story and the way they are collected and told is vital to understanding them. Unfortunately, this can be lost using the lectionary system we have in church that has small little snippets week after week.

What we need is a broader look at Chapter 25. In it we see three parables, a trilogy, that tells one story. We heard the first part last week, the bridesmaids needing to have the oil for the lamps, a message to us all to be alert, to be prepared. Next week it is the parable of the sheep and goats, and today's reading which is about all that has been given to you. The question running through all three is what will you do with it? A prompt to say that what really matters, what matters to God are works of justice and mercy.

These three then are together for a reason, together they form an important thread and part of a constant thread in Matthew. With everything we are given what will we do. Not focusing on money, or on talents but on who you are. A unique individual made in the image of God, different from everyone else, with your own personalities, quirks, characteristics, your own strengths and weaknesses.

In the life we are called to, in following Jesus, what is the way in which that life is lived. Through this trilogy, through the knowledge it offers we called to live our lives not by taking the gift of our faith and burying to keep it safe, but to treasure it. We don't either take those things we discover we have as being made in the image of God and hide them, instead we use them but use them in a particular way, in loving God and loving our neighbour, caring for those on the edges, to name a few. The question is not how much more money must I give? Or what talents discovered and undiscovered am I wasting? The question really is, am I using all that I am given, ourselves, our true beings for God purposes, or rather my own?

For our responsibility goes beyond ourselves. This parable takes aim at our tendency to live for our own goals and dedicate our efforts to our own comfort or security. We are part of something much larger than ourselves: the glorious kingdom of God which will continue to break into this world. Our gifts have been given to us so that we might serve well in God's kingdom.

It isn't enough to acknowledge, use, and develop who we are. We were made to find joy serving in God's kingdom. Our lives take on deeper meaning when who we are leads us to servanthood, our blessings deepen our discipleship, and our purposes become God's purposes. In the background to all of this, remember it is Jesus who is the landowner, Jesus who will return and ask us how did we truly follow him?

So yes, knowledge is power, don't get those plug wires mixed up! But if knowledge is power, can I suggest that wisdom is freedom. There is much wisdom in this passage, indeed even more in seeing them as a trilogy. In short they say this, be alert, be you, and serve God. I hope it is those words that will inspire us as we seek to follow God closely each and every day until the time he does return. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Gracious Lord, in this holy sacrament
you give substance to our hope:
bring us at the last
to that fullness of life for which we long;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

