



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 26th February 2023

The First Sunday of Lent

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

257 (*w1-6, 11*)

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 26th February

8am Said Mass

10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 1st March

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 5th March

8am Said Mass

10am Sung Mass

Panfield Church

Sunday 26th February

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 28th February

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 5th March

11am Morning Worship

369

445

J

Gospel Acclamation

*Man does not live on bread
alone, but on every word
that comes from the
mouth of God.*

NOTICES

Ring for the King - In preparation for King Charles III coronation in May, we are looking to grow our band of bell ringers. This is the perfect time to come and give ringing a go. There will be a taster, drop-in session this Saturday, March 4th from 10am to 12noon. All welcome.

Lent Book - There are copies of the Lent Booklet in both churches. It is entitled 'Dust and Glory' and we hope will give you plenty of food for thought, suggested donation of £2. Thanks.

Lent Course - Mondays 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th March there will be a session to reflect on that week's material from 'Dust and Glory'. Sessions will either run from 1.30pm to 3pm, **or** from 6.30pm to 8pm at The Deanery. Please use the sheet at the back to say which of those times work best for you. A final decision on which we are going for will be made by the middle of the week

World Day of Prayer - Friday March 3rd marks 'World Day of Prayer'. There will be a service at Braintree Baptist Church, starting at 10.30am, involving members from local churches. All welcome.

'Out of this World' - Across March 17th—19th we are hosting a space themed weekend. Friday 17th March from 7-9pm will be a free star-gazing event in the church grounds, no need to book and it's all free. On Saturday, we will have the Indoor Planetarium running all day, tickets £7 and can only

be bought on the day. In the grounds there will be free solar gazing, and in church free craft activities and refreshments. The Sunday service will then be a special celebration with Felsted School Choir joining us to make it a very exciting Mothering Sunday indeed! Mark you diaries now!

Helpers needed - For the space themed event to run smoothly we are looking for volunteers who will be able to give some time on the day to help out. Please see the list at the back. Thank you in advance.

A Warm Place this Winter - Our Warm Space has been an incredible success, and so we have made the decision to run a little longer than planned and will now conclude on Friday April 7th with a slightly shorter session which will conclude at 1.30pm. I am thrilled to say that this regular Friday community lunch space will re-launch in May, more details on that in due course. Until then, please continue to show your support each Friday, and tell others about it too.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, June Blackwood, Tony and Ann, and Margaret Everitt. We also 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 Alfred Willshire, Mabel Blowers, Ethel Sach, Edna Need, Daniel Brooks, Gertrude Robinson, and John South.

The Collect for The First Sunday of Lent

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness,
so may we know your power to save;
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.

Epistle Reading - Romans 5:12-19

You know the story of how Adam landed us in the dilemma we're in—first sin, then death, and no one exempt from either sin or death. That sin disturbed relations with God in everything and everyone, but the extent of that disturbance was not clear until God spelled it out in detail to Moses. So death, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape from Adam to Moses. Even those who didn't sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. But Adam, who got us into this, also points ahead to the One who will get us out of it. Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. If one man's sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God's gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do! There's no comparison between that death-dealing sin and this generous, life-giving gift. The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was the wonderful life sentence. If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides? In a nutshell: Just as one person did wrong and got us all in trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written,

“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you”, and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! for it is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Address

There is a scene in the film Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* where the crowd is listening to what could be the Sermon on the Mount. Those at the back of the crowd are struggling to hear. One of those there says, ‘I think he said “Blessed are the cheesemakers”’, to which another member of the crowd responds, ‘Well, obviously it’s not meant to be taken literally; it refers to any manufacturers of dairy products’. Taking my cue from this, I want to reflect on Jesus’s words, ‘One does not live by bread alone’ without taking the word bread too literally. I do not suppose that we are meant to imagine that Jesus was recommending a diet of caviar and roast venison – even if such luxuries were available in his particular time and place. Nor, indeed, is he about to offer some reflections on fasting or on the Jewish food laws.

As many of his original hearers may well have realised, Jesus is quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures, what we call the ‘Old Testament’. The reference is to the book Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3 which reads ‘[God] humbled you by letting you hunger, then feeding you with manna ... in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’. The emphasis, it is perhaps fair to say, is on being dependent on God and trusting in Him; not putting one’s trust in material possessions. So at the risk of straying a little from the literal sense of not living by bread alone, I want this morning to reflect on how we might make sense of that saying in our world – a world very different from the one Jesus knew – and one where getting and having material possessions appears to be the goal of many people’s lives.

‘You shall not live by bread alone’. You do not live just to satisfy your material wants, at least partly because you will never succeed. There is always something that you have not got, something that is just out of reach, a something which, if only you could acquire it, would allow you to feel satisfied. But it rarely works like that. Having acquired the desired object, there tends to be something else that is just out of reach but which, if it could be obtained, would really satisfy. And so it goes on.

‘You shall not live by bread alone.’ But why not take advantage of the seemingly endless array of things and lifestyle choices on offer in the supermarket of life? Why not make your own world? Why might I want to argue that this sort of approach to life is ultimately profoundly unsatisfactory and perhaps even a betrayal of what human beings were made for? There are some fairly obvious practical objections: a needs (or wants) driven lifestyle tends to increase global injustice and risks serious damage to the planet which is our home. On the other hand, it is important not to despise the good things of life, not to deny the earth’s fruitfulness and human creativity. Jesus was no ascetic. He appears to have known how to enjoy himself and may well have accepted that there was a proper place for material things. But he also knew that human life was about attending to ‘every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’.

So what’s wrong with ‘living by bread alone’; and what might we do instead? A starting point might be to recognise that there is a significant element of fantasy in what might be termed the ‘consumerist dream world’. Can we really create a unique identity simply by picking and mixing from the myriad of competing products and services on offer in the marketplace? Can I simply choose what truths and values I am going to live by and if I don’t like them after I have tried them out for a while, can I simply

change them in the same way as I might change the décor of my living room? Is this ultimately where consumerist society ends up, and if it is, then what are the costs both to the individual and to social cohesion?

Is not all this to start in the wrong place? Rather than starting from self, is it not important to recognise that there is a given-ness about the created order – given because it is created and sustained by one who is Other. As people of faith, moreover, we would want to claim that there are some truths and some values that are embedded in that given-ness. While it is possible to reject those truths and values, as followers of Christ we would surely want to affirm that they are more than just human creations. Indeed we would want to affirm that because God is, God has a claim on us and we respond, in various ways, some more and some less adequate, to that claim. So, we do not so much make our own world, as find it. And we find it already occupied by other people, by history and traditions, by various forms of knowledge and seeking after truth, and by God.

This implies that we need a richer view of human personhood and human participation in society than the consumerist view, whether the latter is seen as offering total individual autonomy, or as implying that everything is illusion and that life is just a game. By contrast, a God-centred view allows us to escape from the trap of seeing life as a project of meeting needs. In the words of Pope John Paul II: 'It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards "having" rather than "being", and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself. It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.'

While the opportunities offered by modern consumer society are not wrong in themselves, attempting simply to construct a world with the isolated individual at the centre of it can never deliver the fulfilment it promises. It is of course important to affirm the value of each unique individual, made in the image of God. Yet there is also something profoundly disturbing about the focus on self that seems to be inherent in our western way of living. 'I did it my way' as the popular Frank Sinatra song proclaims runs counter to a proper understanding of the Christian faith.

At the heart of that faith there is the mystery of the Trinity. Whatever else that mystery may express, it says something about the fundamental importance of relationship. If God in God's essential being is God in relationship, then relationship is surely deeply embedded in creation itself. This implies that to be fully human is to be open to the possibilities of the giving and receiving of love offered by relationship. If this is true, then I cannot simply make my own world without regard to the authentic experience of others who inhabit it. Their experience may challenge and reshape my own preconceptions. I also have to negotiate my space in other people's worlds. Together we share God's world – a world that is made for loving relationships.

'One does not live by bread alone'. Yet too often people still try to. I believe one of the tasks of the church in our day is to demonstrate how inadequate such a lifestyle is and to point to a richer alternative. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith,
increase our hope, and strengthen our love:
teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.