

Newsletter St Mary's and St Augustine's for Sunday 28th June 2020

Sunday Readings: Jeremiah 28: 5-9; Matt 10: 40-end; Psalm 13

Wednesday's Readings: Psalm 119. 81-104; Job 29.

This week's Reflection by Claire

It happened sometime after breakfast and before lunch ... quietly and unnoticed, the water lily on my pond opened out into flower. I have been watching the flower buds develop over the last few weeks. Poised there pregnant but I wondered when they would actually flower, now there she is! Beautiful and radiant in her splendour!!!.

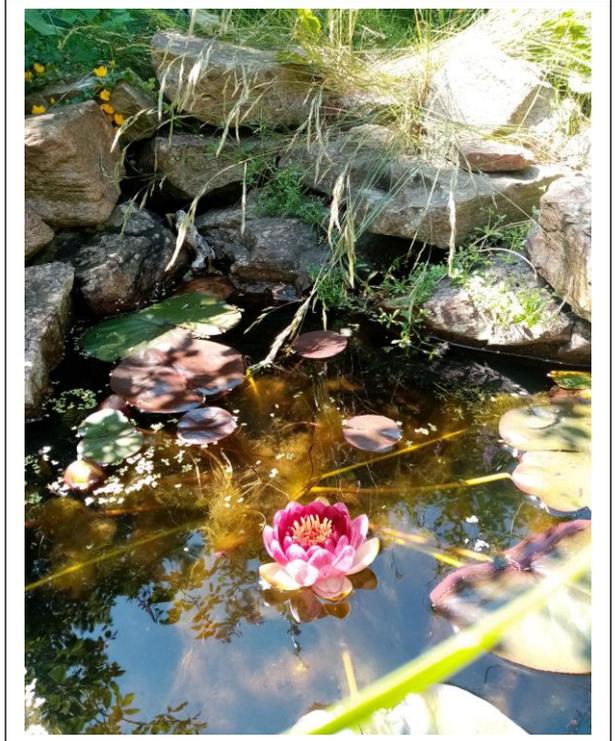
The works of God are quite often like the water lily. I am reminded of the prophet Elijah; God was not in the storm, the earthquake or the fire ... but in the gentle whisper (1 Kings 19). God's ways are often hidden from view, working out His purposes silently and secretly and then, every so often, surprising us with a moment, a presence, a revealing and we find ourselves in a different place having experienced an encounter with God's love and grace.

In the passage from Jeremiah, the prophet speaks to us and says, 'May the Lord bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles' (Jer 28.6).

This week I have been thinking about how do we come back to worship together in church, how to we do that safely, what does that look like for us as a Christian community? As we move from being a separated and dispersed Christian community, we can now think tentatively about what it means to gather again. There is always a movement and journey within the Christian experience, times of wilderness and exile and times of home coming. We are not yet at a time of home coming and because of the necessary restriction when we do get back into our church buildings our experiences are going to be significantly different from where we left.

Over the past few months, we will have been learning something about God, church and community. We may not yet know what lessons we have learnt but there will be a collective and individual wisdom that we will want to share and acknowledge as we come back together. And that wisdom and insight will be precious to us as those lessons will be what will help to guide us forward into being a faithful presence and witness to God's love.

The water lily flower looks amazing. But the hard work began months before the flower opened. Her blossoming didn't just happen. The same will be true of our own individual faith, our church communities and the wider community. Covid 19 has shone a spotlight on the many injustices and inequalities in our communities. It is as we listen to and welcome in the voices of those who have been side-lined and marginalised and try and minister from a place of generosity and grace that we may grow together as a community and find new ways to flower and flourish. Matthew's Gospel tells us about welcoming in the prophets and in doing



so we welcome in the Father; we establish the roots of His kingdom on earth (Matt 10.40-end).

When we look back with hindsight on this time and experience in the months and years to come. I think what we will learn is that it was during this time, this time of exile that God changed us, opening us up to a deeper understanding of His wisdom. And when in a year or two's time when things begin to take off again and we can see things in our lives, churches and communities flowering and flourishing, we will know with a greater certainty that it was the roots established during this time of exile that enable the flowering to take place.

Post Communion Prayer for this Sunday

O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining and whose power we cannot comprehend: show us your glory as far as we can grasp it, and shield us from knowing more than we can bear until we look upon you without fear; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

And don't think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter. It's quiet, but the roots are down there riotous ... Everything you see has its roots in the unseen world. The forms may change, yet the essence remains the same. Every wonderful sight will vanish, every sweet word will fade. But do not be disheartened, the source they come from is eternal, growing branching out giving new life and new joy ... Maybe you are searching in the branches for what only appears in the roots. Rumi

Notices for this week

As restrictions begin to be lifted we are looking to coming back into church BUT we are not rushing this and there are no plans at this stage to resume public worship. However, we will be taking steps towards this.

At St Mary's we are inviting church congregation to an outside picnic and short act of worship. On Sunday 19th July at 12pm. Bring your own food/drink/ picnic chair/ hand sanitiser and remember to socially distance from other households. This is of course weather permitting! We hope to repeat this on August the 16th.

Please continue to use these weekly reflections with the Home Act of Worship for Sunday morning – gathering separately but together at 10.30am. We have not produced a midweek Evening Act of Worship for Ordinary Time but you can access Evening Prayer (as well as Compline and Morning Prayer) for each day via the St Mary's mob site (miniwebsite).

<https://www.stmarys-church.co.uk/mobsite/>

We continue to offer a zoom gathering as a supplement to this worship each Sunday at 11am – the details have been emailed to everyone over the last two weeks and remain the same. Please contact Catherine or Karen if you need a reminder. Please ask if you would like help to access these, and do join and feel free to remain “off camera.”

Roots resources this week include two sets of material - prayers and activities for the lectionary readings <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/worshipathome28jun>

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