**Morning Praise @ Home 18th June 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Isaiah 61: 1 – 4 John 14: 15 – 23

**Reflection from Ruth**

What is a disciple?

Apparently when people are asked this, they think about study, about doing courses, and there is an academic slant to it- which is not what Jesus did with his followers.

The Greek word for disciple - which was the original language of the Bible - actually means apprentice.

However, that word had a much bigger meaning that just training on the job, it was a way of life.

Jesus’ followers lived with him, they travelled with him, ate with him, prayed with him, and on the way He taught them.

So in fact, it was a lifestyle. Jesus wasn’t teaching theologians, he was training people to ***be*** like Him.

We live in an individualistic society. We are cautious about herd mentality.

And rightly so. We must all question what we are told by our leaders, and test things out. And let’s face it, human beings are fallible. Even the most Godly, spiritual leader can go wrong sometimes.

Crucially - we are not a herd, we are a flock, and we are not following a person, we are following the Good Shepherd. Now in a flock, all the sheep move together, if they all start going in different directions, there would be chaos.

And this is the second point about discipleship - we need to do it together.

The definition Alison Morgan gives of Christian discipleship is:- an apprentice undertaken in community.

We cannot serve our apprenticeship in isolation from one another.

If we’re really honest, when we hear this sort of idea, our first thought is ‘but that would mean I’d have to deal with all those people that I find difficult’.

Next week I’m going for my final set of interviews in my discernment for ordination process. It’s 2 days away staying with a group of people I’ve never met, with a group of assessors who will be watching us!

One of the things I’ll have to do is a group exercise, where a group are set a task and then are observed while they are doing it.

And if ***I’m*** completely honest, there is nothing I would like to do less. I find that sort of situation so artificial - I don’t know these people and I’ve had no time to build relationships.

I used to think that sort of thing was a complete waste of time.

However, on my discernment journey, I’ve had to do a lot of reflection - on scripture, and on my own beliefs and characteristics, and I’d come to the understanding that when we are working together, there are going to be differences - there has to be - but the way we work together is more important than the outcome. Being in community means everyone is valued and reflecting that position is more important than getting my own way.

And that can be challenging, particularly if in our previous lives and careers, getting the right outcome is more important than the feelings of the group.

And let’s face it, we all know people in churches who seem to make it their lives’ mission to get their own way.

So the question we have to ask ourselves is - do I do that? Maybe we’re all guilty of it in some small way.

And maybe we wouldn’t find all those people so difficult if we weren’t trying to get our own way.

As we continue with this series of talks, we’ll learn about how we go about doing discipleship as a community, but for now, two things:-

-Jesus made apprentices by showing them a way of life.

-That way of life was always done as a community.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Tony**

We are asked today to pray for our bishops, Mark, Julie and Sam.

We pray that God will sustain and guide our bishops as they seek to implement our new diocesan vision.

**Vision Prayer**

Eternal God,  
whose Son Jesus called his disciples to cast the net wide:  
Open our eyes to glimpse your vision,  
open our ears to hear the needs of the world,  
prepare our hands to do your work,  
show us the gifts we have and the treasure we must seek.  
Unite us as your people across the Diocese of Chester  
to worship, to witness and to work  
for the glory of Christ our Saviour. Amen.

What can we bring in our service?

Father we ask for your guidance to show us how best we can serve You, not only here in our church community but also in the places where we live and work. Show us how to use our lives and time for your service.

We pray for our friends in Shotwick. We ask that the harp concert will bring joy and be a source of outreach for all who will attend.

We pray for a time of refreshment for all who are on holiday at this time. Help them to return and be filled with your blessings so that they will be able to worship you with renewed strength.

We continue to pray for all who are unwell or receiving treatment either at home or in hospital. Give them a sense of your healing in their lives.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**