



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 16th May 2021

NEWS UPDATE



Roof Work



We are expecting the work to St Christopher's roof to commence any day now. The roofer is waiting for a spell of five consecutive dry days – is that too much to ask for?! There will be a small amount of disruption caused by scaffold towers at the front and side of the building.

This comes as hall usage is increasing all the time. The scout and guide groups have now resumed. Slimming World are in on Thursday evenings, Friday mornings, and Saturday mornings. Dance:X are resuming this Thursday, and we have a new group starting on Saturday afternoons Called 'Illusion Pole Fitness.' It is good to see St Christopher's getting busier again, and we look forward to offer our hall without the need for buckets to remain in place!

BIBLE READING – Psalm 1

*Happy are those who do not follow
the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*

*They are like trees planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.*

*The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*



THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – written by Mike Clayton

“The Two Ways”

In psalm 1 there are two striking images taken from the natural world, two comparisons made as to what we can be like, what people are like.

The first is a comparison with trees, trees planted by streams of water, and whose leaves do not wither; and the other is to chaff, the dry husks that are separated from the seeds at harvest and thrown away, discarded.

Firstly to trees, and let me ask you this question – what do you think makes for a “good” tree? I’m guessing that there must be times when you take note of a tree or maybe a whole wood. What is it that tends to make your eye linger on a particular tree? If you were a tree inspector – what would you have on your checklist to tick off as you score a particular tree?

A Strong Tree



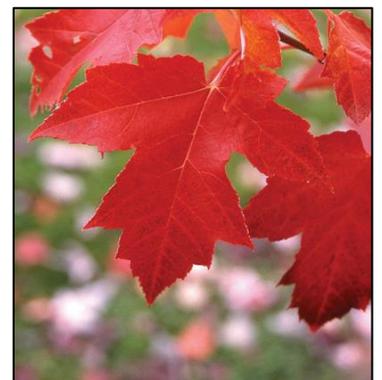
I think there’s many things you might put – how strong the branches are, how thick the trunk, so that even a Force 10 gale would be hard pressed to get the thing down? There’s a huge beech tree at the back of us, over in a neighbour’s garden a few doors down; the pigeons love it, they just hunker down on its branches whatever the weather. Trees that stand strong and remain firm and upright.

The psalmist talks about those who are happy, those who are blessed, “...*who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers...*” (v.1). People who stand strong, who stand firm, who don’t follow the crowd and do what is wrong, don’t bend with the prevailing wind, or just go with the flow. You may well get stick for not going along with it all, or be seen as being a bit simple or stupid, but it takes a strong person.

A tree with beautiful leaves

So what else might be on your list of things that make a good tree good?

It might it be something like the colour of the leaves? There’s a lovely kind of maple tree that I pass when I’m sometimes nipping down Hawkhurst avenue on my bike, something so beautiful from the colours alone. So vivid, so uplifting, it just makes you feel good to be alive, life in all its fullness.



It's not just the things we don't do, the things we stand against that matter but also the things we are for, all the positives, the things we enjoy, that we delight in, and that we delight in God.

"...but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night..." (verse 2).

There is that sense of beauty, enjoyment, pleasure – it's not just about the things that we don't do.

When Jesus calls us to follow him, it is with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and all our mind that we do this. Jesus wants more than just for you to live a good upright law-abiding life - he died on the cross for way more than just that. It might sound a strange thing to say, but it is important that we enjoy our faith. That's not to say of course that at times it won't be hard going, following Christ does not come with any in-built promise of a life of ease. But there is always that steady undercurrent of reward, fulfilment, peace, joy in knowing Jesus, and his presence with us always. That we delight in the Lord. As the bible says in Nehemiah, "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

An Enduring Tree

So as well as a tree being strong and standing upright, as well as a tree being vibrant and full of life, a joy to behold, what else might be on your list of things that make a good tree?

Well there's one tree that comes to my mind – on our estate there's a sharp right angle bend on Tower Lane as the road curves right around the back of an oak tree, it's almost as though the tree was there long before the road ever was, and so the road has had to curve all the way around it. A good tree in my mind is one that gives you that sense of enduring, of being long lasting; it was there long before I arrived and for all I know will be still be standing there long after I'm gone.



This can be said of a tree that lasts, that endures (verse 3), such trees

"...yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do they prosper". This promise that what we do will last, it counts, we will bear fruit, it won't be all for nothing, and that we will prosper, though that may not be in the way that we usually think of "prosperity".

The Chaff



But then there is the other image, apart from trees, that of the chaff,

"The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away." (v4).

Jesus was never one for mincing his words, as he says in Matthew Chapter 7:13, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it"

Which one are we?

Two ways, two images, one of trees, the other of chaff.

Jesus began his ministry in Galilee by calling people to repent, “Repent – for the Kingdom of God is near”. (Matthew 4:17). Jesus still calls today, to repent for the Kingdom of God is near. I only know of one road to the Cross, and that is the, “I’m sorry” road, only one perfect sinless sacrifice, only one Saviour and only one Lord - Jesus Christ, God’s son, our Saviour and Lord.

And the question we all have to answer is are we like the trees or like the chaff?

Prayers

For our prayers this week, as more of the covid restrictions that we have all been living under are being eased as of tomorrow, I thought that it would be good to pray using part of the prayer attributed to St.Patrick, as below.

Literally everyone I am seeing or speaking to on the phone in my GP work has been affected by the pandemic in some way or other. As we begin to gently look to the future, please use this prayer to bring before the Lord perhaps some of the pain that you have had during this time, maybe the hardships that you have endured and may still be carrying; or equally to remember before the Throne of Grace, those you know who have - and maybe still are – been finding life really difficult. The words of the old hymn are just as true today as they ever were: *“What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear..”*.

St. Patrick’s Breastplate

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

And please remember that there is professional help available, including some really good stuff on-line e.g. at gov.uk, but also via your local surgery and here at church too. God bless, Mike.