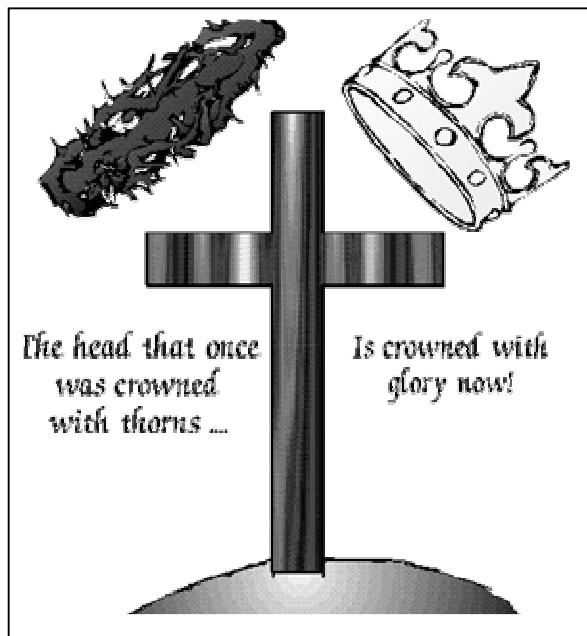


St Thomas', Trowbridge & St John's, West Ashton

April 2010
Monthly News



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GOOD FRIDAY, EASTER, PENTECOST AND THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IN 350 WORDS!

We all have to wrestle with the problem of innocent suffering in the light of what we know and have experienced of the absolute goodness and love of God. We know that God is sovereign, but that he has also given free will and sovereignty on earth to the human race (see Genesis 1:28) and is not willing to violate this. Why, in some instances this involves terrible suffering, when in others people's lives are wonderfully spared, is an area of mystery about which we sometimes have to keep a reverent silence - we don't know all the ramifications as God does. In addition to this, there is a real devil who is empowered by bad human choices leading to real spiritual warfare on earth. The Son of God invaded this enemy occupied territory when he was born into the world to begin God's rescue mission. On the cross, Jesus entered into the depths of human suffering and bore the full weight of human depravity, making a way of salvation and return to relationship with God for all people. In addition, he defeated the devil and destroyed his work (1 John 3:8). His victory over sin, death, and the devil was gloriously demonstrated when he surprised heaven, earth and hell (though not, of course, the Father or the Holy Spirit) by bursting from the grave on Easter Morning. The second wave of the divine invasion to recapture earth began when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost. Since then, all who receive Jesus and the Spirit, not only receive personal salvation and sanctification, but are also enlisted in God's invading army. We have been given his authority to enforce the victory Jesus has won over the world, the flesh, and the devil (Luke 10:19). We share in this exciting mission with countless saints, martyrs and angels throughout the world, and it is building towards a glorious consummation when Jesus shall come again and his Kingdom will be complete. God is a God of justice and all injustices will ultimately be put right, some in this life, some in eternity.

In view of all that, have a truly HAPPY EASTER!!!

Allan

Prophetic Ministry – a personal perspective.

Allan Coutts

We are now placing greater emphasis on Prophetic Ministry, in the form of sharing revelatory words, pictures, art and songs in our worship. There are dangers associated with this type of ministry, which we need to be aware of. A few years ago, I would probably have felt it was all too risky to get involved with! However, the New Testament clearly teaches that prophecy is a valuable gift of the Spirit (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 4:11) and I feel that now is the right time to encourage the church to explore it... because:

God only gives good gifts to his children and none of these should be refused (Luke 11:13, 1 Corinthians 14:1). It is true that when we are 'young' in a gift we may behave like over-excited children with a new toy! I don't think this displeases the Father, as long as our goal is to mature in the gifts, and only use them to benefit others and glorify him.

God has brought a spontaneous increase in this way of hearing him speak in my life (and others' lives) over the last year or so, suggesting it is something he wants us to become more aware of at this time.

I feel that God has now sufficiently prepared me, and others in our leadership team, to be able to lead the church safely through the pitfalls of this area (though we must never become careless or over-confident). This might not have been the case a few years ago.

God does not give these gifts to make us look good, but so that we, and others, will be blessed and his kingdom will be advanced. He gives gifts because he loves us, not because we deserve it.

It is worth saying that, when we strike a particular emphasis like this for a period of time, we may appear to be out of balance by giving it too much prominence. This will right itself in time as God leads us to emphasise other aspects of our faith. It is also true that the enemy will try to spoil or counterfeit this gift, but as the saying goes, 'you never see a counterfeit penny'. In other words, he only tries to copy or spoil things of great value.

This means we should not shy away from prophecy, but that we should proceed with caution and wisdom. I expect the prophetic group (like all other church groups) to stay accountable to me and to observe a number of safeguards, which we have taught from time to time. David Goldstone, who is heading up the development of this ministry, is fully aware of these 'ground rules' too.

We must never elevate any form of prophetic revelation above Scripture, or accept any 'words' which contradict the Bible.

Words given to individuals should always be strengthening, encouraging and comforting (1 Corinthians 14:3)

Prophecies must always be weighed and should therefore be offered humbly, not forced on someone as a 'thus says the Lord'. We can all get it wrong!

Prophecies for the church should be weighed by church leadership and only shared publicly with their approval.

Major decisions should not normally be taken on the strength of a prophetic word alone, although these can be very encouraging as part of a process of guidance where a number of indicators all point in the same direction.

It is unwise to give people 'promises' in emotionally charged areas such as the desire for a marriage partner or a child ("no hatch, match or dispatch!").

Two sermons on St Thomas' website may be of interest: '*A Prophetic Journey*' (8 November 2009) and '*Until Perfection comes*' (31 January 2010).

The APCM made simple!

What is the APCM? The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (St. John's Friday 16 April 7-30pm, St. Thomas' Tuesday 20 April 7-30pm) is the occasion when:

Churchwardens, Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), Sidesmen, and Deanery Synod reps. are elected.

Annual Reports and Accounts are presented and discussed.

Allan gives an overview of the past year and the future direction of the church.

Why does this concern me? Because we have to work within the Church of England's structures of church government... and make them work for us (or rather, for Jesus and His Kingdom!).

Who is eligible to vote?

Anyone resident in the parish, plus those on the electoral roll, can vote for Churchwardens.

Only those on the electoral roll may vote in elections to the PCC.

What is the electoral roll? A list of those who are regular worshippers or supporters of the church. If you are not on the roll (or not sure) please check with Chris Hicks (St. Thomas') or Joan Bond (St. John's). To be eligible you must be:

Over 16

Baptised (in any Christian church)

Resident in the parish, **or** a regular worshipper at the church for at least six months.

Rise up Women!

A worship and praise evening for all women in Trowbridge and the surrounding area.

Saturday, 10th April 7.30pm

St Thomas' Church

Guest Speaker: Sam Whiley

from West Wilts Vineyard