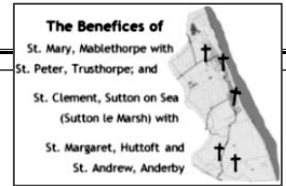




There are **PCC Meetings** at Mablethorpe on Wednesday 22nd at 2.00pm and Sutton le Marsh on Thursday 23rd at 7.00pm.



And there is a **Service of Healing and Wholeness** at St. Wilfrid's, Alford on Wednesday 22nd at 7.00pm – as usual, all are welcome to this.



NOVEMBER 19TH – THE SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT A REFLECTION BY THE RECTOR, REV PETER LILEY

There are several aspects of our readings this Sunday which might strike you as “unfair”.

First, in the gospel, Jesus tells the well-known Parable of the Talents. In this particular version of the story the three servants are given five, two and one talent(s) respectively; the first two trade and each doubles his master's “investment”.

What perhaps seems unfair to us is the treatment meted out to the third slave. He has not robbed his master, for he returns the talent (perhaps a bit muddy!); but he has squandered the opportunity that having the talent gave him – he has yielded nothing, he has borne no fruit.

It is easier for us to understand this story than some of Jesus' others, because the very word “talent” (here meaning a considerable sum of money) has come in our language to mean a God-given gift or ability. So when the story challenges us, “How have you used your God-given talents?” the meaning is clear – each of us have received gifts from God (maybe artistic gifts, academic gifts, practical gifts, sporting gifts, caring gifts, administrative gifts; probably a bit of a combination!) Are we using these wisely? Are we using them to advance God's Kingdom? Are we bearing fruit for God?

Likewise, it may seem slightly unfair that the third man's talent is given to the one who had (and made) five, rather than the one who had two – which would have evened the score up a little. But Jesus is teaching that faithful living begets faithful living, and that where people use their talents wisely the yield will be exponentially greater.

Another potential “unfairness” that these servants faced is that the master does not tell them when he will return – in other words they did not know how long they had to turn a profit. St. Paul picks up on this theme in his First Letter to the Thessalonians: and he is clear that we cannot know when Christ will return. Yet there is a tension - using the example of a pregnant women, clearly she has some idea of when her labour will begin (especially in these days of scans etc.) but she can never know exactly; similarly, we might know that a gang of thieves is operating in the area, but we cannot know which night they will try and steal the lead of our Church roof! So we have to be ready; always ready, living as people of the daylight rather than the nighttime (ie. not expecting our dark deeds to be hidden by the night).

For many generations of Christians the Return of Christ has been preceded by their own death, and that may well happen to us too – but all the same points about being ready, and not knowing when that will be, apply to this too.

And all this may indeed seem a little unfair: the expectation that we make it our business to be fruitful for God's Kingdom, and that we operate in an uncertain timeline. Except that the one who is in control and will decide when and how we shall be called to account, is doing so in the greatest possible love and compassion, and wants nothing more than for each of us to succeed and experience the abundance of his Eternal Kingdom, free from all pain and sorrow.

Please pray: for our emergency services, Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance, RNLI and Coastguard and for others who respond to crises (eg. Lives Volunteers, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Samaritans etc.); and for all in our community who are struggling to make ends meet or who fear the higher fuel bills that winter brings, and FurniChurch, our Community Larders, Debt Counsellors and all who seek to help.

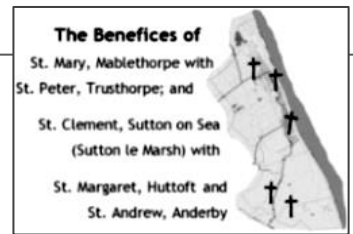
Parish Website: <http://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/mablethorpesutton>

Parish Office: Jen on 01507 464855 or office@alfordgroup.org.uk (Tue 11.30am-3.00pm, Fri 11.30am-1.30pm)

Rev Peter Liley 443948, rev.p.liley@btinternet.com & Canon Chris Lilley 440039, c.lilley@btinternet.com

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NOVEMBER 26TH – THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT (“CHRIST THE KING”) – A REFLECTION BY CANON CHRIS LILLEY



When you think about Jesus, do you envisage him walking around the Sea of Galilee, or maybe at the temple in Jerusalem? I don't think that many of us first think of him in heaven. So it is good to do just that. So today we celebrate Christ the King of heaven.

All nations will be gathered around Jesus on his throne and Jesus is still working, sorting out the sheep from the goats. We need to remind ourselves that in the Holy Land sheep and goats are at first sight virtually identical. Here goats are tall and slim whilst sheep are rounder. Not so in the Middle East where food is less plentiful, they look just the same.

So Jesus studies them carefully. Of course we are not really talking about sheep and goats at all. Jesus is referring to people. Some, the sheep, will remain in heaven with Jesus. Whilst the goats will go to eternal punishment.

What characteristics may we expect to see from the sheep (i.e. us)? We provide food and drink to the needy. For us that may mean helping the foodbank. We look after the sick. Do we do this? We welcome strangers. How welcoming are we, both in church and more generally?

Do we do these things out of a sense of duty or naturally and out of love for Jesus?

Jesus goes on to challenge those who do NOT do these things. They turn their back every time they see someone in need. Don't be a goat!

Do you remember WWJD? It used to be printed on bracelets and the like. It stands for, "What Would Jesus Do?" It is still a good question to ask ourselves when we need God's guidance. But in this context we know the answer. Jesus would feed the hungry, visit the sick and those in prison, and welcome the stranger. Just do it!

Please pray: for our all who work to heal the sick, feed the hungry, welcome and house strangers, visit those in prison, etc., etc., whether as part of the their job, because they are caring for a loved-one, or out of love for Jesus Christ (or a combination of these motivations); and for all who run our care services (healthcare, care and nursing homes, homecare organisations, hospices etc.,) especially as they have to balance our huge expectations with limited resources.

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