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Crossway

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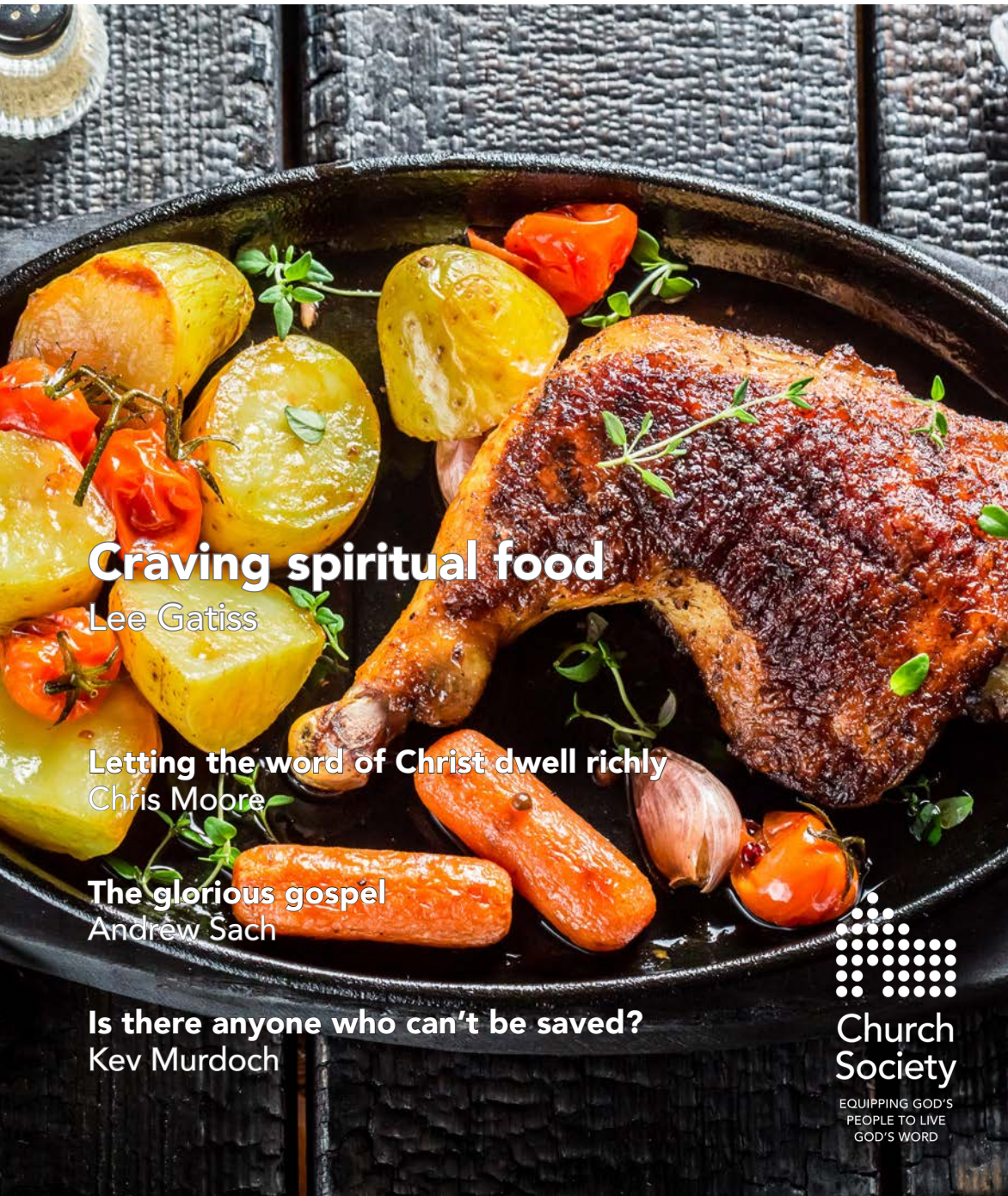

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Church Society
EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE GOD'S WORD

Craving spiritual food

Lee Gatiss wonders why we listen to sermons.

There isn't a lot happening in the Church of England this Autumn, in one way. With no General Synod shenanigans to look forward to, it would be tempting to take our foot off the pedal a bit. Maybe we can just get on with the normal round of standard church things, like Sundays and sermons and evangelism and prayer.

But I've been pondering this question: Why do we listen to sermons? Have you ever thought about that?

Come to the word as food, not entertainment

The great puritan preacher, John Owen (1616–1683) wrote about this many years ago. As he was writing his commentary on Hebrews 5:11, on how easy it was to become 'dull of hearing' or spiritually sluggish, he made some very penetrating applications. He says there needs to be in us a desire for the word of God, or we will stop growing in our understanding of it. He writes:

The end which we propose unto ourselves in hearing hath a great influence into the regulation of the whole duty. Some hear to satisfy their convictions; some, their curiosity and inquiry after notions; some, to please themselves; some, out of custom; some, for company; and many know not why, or for no end at all. It is no wonder if such persons be slothful in and unprofitable under hearing.

The reason we sit and listen to a sermon, has a great influence over what we get out of it. People listen to sermons for various reasons: to reinforce their pre-existing convictions, or because of simple curiosity. They come out of custom, or just for some company. Some have no idea why we have to have a sermon inflicted on us every Sunday. No wonder these hearers are spiritually dull, says Owen.

The solution? How can we hear more profitably? 'To supply us with this growth and increase, the preaching of the word is appointed of God as food for our souls; and we shall never receive it aright unless we desire it and long for it to this end and purpose', says Owen. You have to come looking for food.

Scripture as 'food for the soul' is a great image. Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) used it too, in the first of the Church of England's authorised Homilies. He calls the Bible 'that lively food of our souls', and says:

> It is only those who are so drowned in worldly vanities that they neither savour God nor any godliness, whose stomachs loathe and abhor the heavenly knowledge and food of God's word. Indeed, that is why they desire such vanities, rather than the true knowledge of God.

If we have no desire and appetite for the word – like a hungry child who eagerly comes to the table to be fed by a nice dinner – then we will be dull and get no blessing or spiritual benefit, even from the best preaching. If you're not looking in every sermon for something that will edify you and feed your soul – if you're

'Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.'

1 Peter 2:2

only waiting for anecdotes or jokes, political comments or theological controversies, or for the preacher to slip up somehow – then you will never benefit spiritually from the preaching. You're not using it properly, for the purpose it was designed.

What we need to do, to use John Owen's own phrase, is 'free our minds'. Our corrupt affections will repel the word and block its path into our hearts. So as James 1:21 says, 'put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.' That's the ESV translation. Owen of course quotes the King James Version which says 'lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness.' This is a call to cold Christians. If we don't put sordid things out of our minds, we will not receive the word of God preached to us with meekness.

Your naughtiness is a cancer, 'the corrupting, depraving power and efficacy of prevailing lusts in the mind' as Owen put it. If our minds are filled with what he calls 'noisome lusts', we will be dull and slothful, and our hearts will be sure to wander off while the preacher preaches, because our lusts are louder than the preacher's microphone. We prefer entertainment for our passions, says Owen, to entertaining the word. Which is why entertainment in general has taken over in much preaching, rather than edification.

So we need to prepare better, for the hearing and preaching of the word, and come to it not as entertainment but as food for our souls. Otherwise it's just empty wind, and of no use to us.

Prayer Diary: October

Please pray every day that God's blessing will be on Church Society to sustain it and guide its ministry.

1 Pray for clergy, PCCs and churchwardens as they consider how best to respond to the bishops' proposed Prayers of Love and Faith. Pray for them to have wisdom and courage.

2 Reepham* (Norwich) – Team Rector, Keith Rengert.

3 Pray for Lee Gatiss's writing ministry, that his books and articles would be edifying and useful to the church.

4 Ringsfield* (St Eds & Ips) – P-in-C, Mark Bee.

5 Pray for Ros Clarke speaking at the North London Women's Convention today: Made by God: body and soul.

…the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.
Mark 1:15

6 Rodden (Bath & Wells) – P-in-C, Joanne Robinson.

7 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, St John, Walthamstow in the Diocese of Chelmsford, and the Vicar Kieran Bush. Please pray for God to speak powerfully through our sermon series in Acts and our regular children's groups so that North Walthamstow would be transformed by Jesus one life at a time.

8 High Roding (Chelmsford) – P-in-C, Robert Stone. For wisdom in planning mission and ministry following the successful completion of the Curacy of Rev Gary Fleming and the extra workload this creates in the benefice of ten churches. For new opportunities to celebrate the love of God with all.

9 Pray for Luckley House School for which Church Society appoints Trustees, for wisdom and boldness for the senior team and governors to uphold a biblical Christian ethos through all aspects of school life.

Preaching is designed to be even more spiritually useful to us than simply reading the Bible for yourself. Because God has explicitly ordained sermons for our benefit.

Reverently obey the word, whoever is preaching it

The Thessalonians received the gospel from the apostle Paul, 'not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God' (1 Thessalonians 2:13). To despise the hearing and preaching of the word, is to despise the gospel.

At this point, someone will object. 'I can imagine giving reverence to the Bible. But am I supposed to revere the word of a mere human preacher as well? Surely that's all mixed up with my Vicar's very human weaknesses!' John Owen says, rather strongly, in a sentence that would shock many congregations: 'there is the same reverence due to God in the word as preached, as in the word as written; and a peculiar advantage attends it beyond reading of the word, because God hath himself ordained it for our benefit.'

I found this surprising. He's not talking about reverence for the preacher, as if their celebrity status is boosted. But reverence for God whose word is being preached. Preaching is designed to be even more spiritually useful to us than simply reading the Bible for yourself. Because God has explicitly ordained sermons for our benefit. I guess that's why John Stott used to say 'Sermonettes make Christianettes.' Or as P. T. Forsyth put it, 'A Christianity of short sermons is a Christianity of short fibre.'

It's also why Owen says it is 'the bane of all profitable hearing' to be constantly disputing and arguing about the sermons we hear. Social media doesn't help here, of course – since every sermon that's put online, even from otherwise doctrinally sound preachers, can be endlessly pulled apart by distant onlookers who always think they could do better. We're meant to be spiritually hungry listeners, not restaurant critics.

The Rector of St Helen's Church Bishopsgate, in the City of London (from 1666) was a man called Thomas Horton. In one of his sermons, he said:

> Let this teach us with what affections to come to the Ordinances, the Preaching and hearing of the Word, namely as those which expect and desire salvation from it as the end whereunto it is intended. Let us not come to a Sermon as to a Prize, or a mere trial of wits, to see who can do best; only to spend our verdict on the Preacher, or out of mere fashion and custom, only because others come before us; but let us come to it with meekness, and humility, and fear and expectation, as that whereby we must be judged, and whereby we must be saved.

Sermons are not an Olympic sport. They're not performances we are meant to sit and judge and award medals to, or score out of 100. They are meant to be for our spiritual benefit. Are we using them as such?

It is a wonder that God has chosen weak and sinful human beings to convey such an important message. But, to use one of John Owen's illustrations, it is preferable to have a few bits of dirt or dust in our water pipes than no water at all. 'Your business', says Owen, 'is to separate the defilement and use the water, unless you intend to perish with thirst.' Preaching from mere humans gives us an opportunity to exercise our graces and duties – to exercise discernment: 'test everything; hold fast what is good' as 1 Thessalonians 5:21 puts it. Not 'test everything; gossip about what is bad'. Sure, it is our duty to separate the wheat from the chaff in what we hear. But also

'when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God'

1 Thessalonians 2:13

to develop a sense of tenderness towards our imperfect preachers, and (I might add) it is our duty to pray for them more. If the sermons you hear aren't brilliant, it's in your best interests to pray for your preacher more fervently.

Obeying the word

We must 'give up our souls in obedience to the word' says John Owen, because 'when we are not in this frame we shall be unprofitable hearers'. Notice he says 'we' there. Owen was applying all this to himself too. He was not above it all or absolved from this duty just because he was a great theologian. He lamented that some Christians thought they were exempt from obedience to the commands of Christ. Which is a word for any Christians, any pastors even, who think special rules apply to them. You know they don't. You have no exemption. Apply the sermon to yourself, not someone elsewhere.

John Owen said that lack of obedience to God's word is 'the field wherein all apostasy visibly grows.' In other words, if you don't want to fall away, listen up and don't be spiritually sluggish in putting the word you hear into practice yourself.

So I guess this is what we should be getting on with this autumn, while we wait to see what will happen in the Church of England. Are we going to sit on our laurels, or make spiritual progress?

Lee Gatiss is the Director of Church Society and author of Fulfil Your Ministry: 2 Timothy and Titus and the Challenges of Serving the Gospel.

Prayer Diary: October

10 Pray for the work of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) as it seeks to contend for the gospel in the Church of England, and for their meeting today.

11 Routh (York) – P-in-C, Jonathan Baker.

12 Ryde, St James (Portsmouth) – Chaplain, James Leggett. Please pray for the gospel witness of the whole church family at St. James to the people of Ryde. Please pray for the next season for the church as we seek a new minister in 2025.

13 Sevington (Canterbury) – Team Vicar, Teena Twelves.

14 Pray for the Standing Commission on the Five Guiding Principles meeting today, and especially for Church Society members Ros Clarke, Charlie Skrine and Rob Munro to participate wisely and well.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.
Daniel 7:14

15 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board which is meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes. For Paul Darlington as Chairman.

16 Slaidburn* (Blackburn) – Vacancy.

17 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, Christ Church, Wharton in the Diocese of Chester, and the Vicar Christopher Pierce.

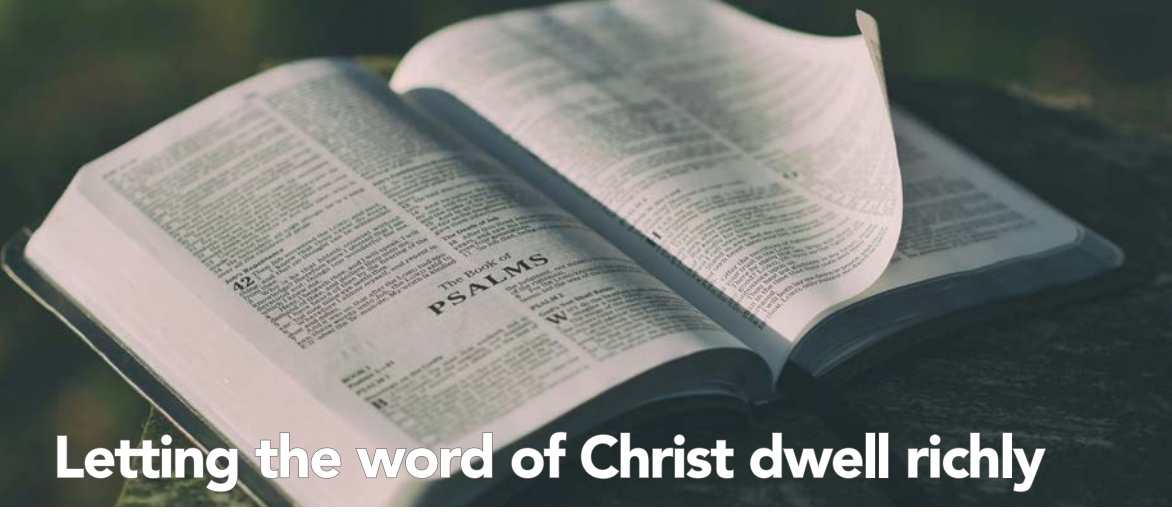
18 Southfields, St Michael (Southwark) – Vicar, Stephen Melluish.

19 Pray for Ros Clarke speaking at a women's event at St Andrew the Great in Cambridge today on Holiness and Hormones.

20 St Illogan (Truro) – Vacancy.

21 Pray for evangelical bishops in the Church of England to stand firm for Jesus amidst all the pressures of their role.

22 St Pinnock (Truro) – P-in-C, Ben Morgan-Lundie.



Letting the word of Christ dwell richly

Aaron Burden on Unsplash

Chris Moore asks why Anglicans neglect the Psalms.

In 1739, in Boston, Massachusetts, one John Hammett published a work entitled 'Promiscuous Singing No Divine Institution'. As was the custom of the time, the subheading gives a summary of what was to follow: 'having neither president [sic] nor precept to support it, either from the musical institution of David, or from the Gospel dispensation. : Therefore it ought to be exploded, as being a humane invention, tending rather to gratify the carnal ears of men, than to be acceptable and pleasing worship to God.'

This was not simply an American argument. Some fifty years earlier, in 1686, an Assembly of Baptists met to debate the whole question of hymn-singing. The issue was the words: might you sing something which, being a human composition, might be theologically erroneous? Is this safe? The Assembly concluded it was not, and passed a resolution to the effect that 'it was not conceived anywise safe for the churches to admit such carnal formalities.'

Losing the Psalms

Over the years which followed those who opposed hymns lost the argument, especially when they began to flow freely from the pen of Isaac Watts, John Newton and Charles Wesley. In fact, as we survey the church services of the present day we find a rather unexpected casualty of these historical worship wars: the Psalms themselves.

As a young and rather cherubic choirboy I was enveloped in Psalms, and their place in our Anglican tradition. At our church we still had matins and evensong, and we chanted the Psalms according to the order laid out by Cranmer. Years later, when lecturing, I would take students to monasteries and there we would once again see the Psalms being used in the daily office. In my work with the Eastern Orthodox I am often in services, and the Psalms form the bedrock of their services. When travelling north of the border, I am often found in Presbyterian churches, and there metrical forms of the Psalms are a staple. Yet they are curiously absent from most of our Anglican services. Why?

At one level the answer is simply that they are seen as boring and difficult to set to music. At another level they are seen as harking back to a rather outdated form of worship, and we like things to be less formal these days. As the decades have passed, with them has the memory of the use of Psalms in our worship.

And nobody seems to have asked the question: what have we lost? From exclusively singing Psalms we have swung the worship pendulum and now exclude the singing of Psalms. After their use in the worship of God for three millennia they have faded away. And to that I would want to issue a curmudgeonly harrumph.

As the quote from Colossians above suggests, the Psalms were a staple of Christian worship from the earliest days. This was the hymnbook of Jesus himself, and a Psalm was on his lips as he wrought our salvation upon that dread cross. As he endured the horror of the crucifixion, it was

‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.’

Colossians 3:16

To use Psalms communally, such that they soak deeply into our soul, equips us to respond in a Christlike manner to all sorts of occasions.

to Psalm 22 that he turned. A Psalm which was so much a part of his consciousness that even under such duress it came to his tongue.

Using the Psalms

And here is the genius of the Psalms: they form and give us language. They offer us an inspired way to pray and respond to the events which at times engulf us. They connect us to the great tradition of prayer of the people of God, and join our voices to their cries. The great range of emotions present in their words gives us the courage to dare to express our deepest emotions to God. King David was described as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), and here we can discover his very prayers and praises. What precious treasures these are: the thoughts of such a man!

Ah, says one, but we can use the Psalms in our own private devotions. We don’t have to use them in services for them to have their use. True. And also not true. At its core, Christianity is a communal affair and we are shaped by the church family as a whole. What we model in our services forms the basis of what we practise in private, and it is in our churches that people often first encounter Christianity. It is worth giving some thought to the range of emotions expressed in our services. We praise God – good! Do we also lament? Do we give the impression that it is somewhat defective to be a saddened Christian by never crying out together in our worship: ‘My God, My God why have you forsaken me’? Is our worship reflecting the whole range of emotions lived out in our Christian life? The Psalms are full of lament. What have we lost by not using them?

This is all the more the case as we respond to current events, and the state of God’s church. A few choice Psalms would furnish us with the language to respond. To use them communally, such that they soak deeply into our soul, equips us to respond in a Christlike manner to all sorts of occasions.

To sing hymns and spiritual songs is good, but it is not enough. The Psalms should form part of our worship so that ‘the word of Christ’ dwells in us richly. Ask yourself the question: can you recall more verses of hymns than the Psalms, which form part of our Scriptures?

So let me issue a plea on behalf of the Psalms. Might we look to use them once again in our worship? Might we meditate on them in private, but also proclaim them together? Might we allow them to guide us through the whole emotional life of the faith, and approach God in the full richness of *all* our experiences?

Augustine puts it well: ‘If the psalm prays, you pray. If the psalm laments, you lament. If the psalm exalts, you rejoice. If it hopes, you hope. If it fears, you fear. Everything written here is a mirror for us.’ The Psalms are our inheritance. Claim them!

Chris Moore is the Director for Public Engagement for Church Society.

The glorious gospel

In these times of confusion, Andrew Sach reminds us of what is at the basis of everything we do.

It's said that one generation teaches the gospel, the next generation assumes the gospel, and the third generation stops believing the gospel. That is why we need to keep on saying the main things again, and over and over. That is, we need to remember the gospel.

But what is the gospel? Most importantly, what does the Bible say about the gospel? What's the gospel on the gospel's own terms?

The gospel is a message.

The gospel is a message of good news. At its heart it is not just a set of events, or a theology about those events, or even a life transformation or a world transformation that results from those events. The gospel is a *message*: a message about the events, a message about the theology, a message about the life transformation. The noun *euangelion*, translated 'gospel', means 'good news'. The verb that goes with it is always a speaking verb: it's something you say.

Obviously (although lots of people seem to miss it) if the gospel is fundamentally a message, then it has to be communicated using words. There is a dreadful theological statement attributed to St Francis of Assisi (I don't know whether he actually said it): 'Preach the gospel, using words if necessary'. But words are *very much* necessary. It's not possible to communicate a message without words. Actions might *adorn* the gospel, but actions themselves can't *be* the gospel.

A while ago it was the fashion for Christian unions around the country to do so-called servant evangelism, which involved not saying things, but doing acts of love. People would go around clearing up the town, picking up rubbish, handing out water to people outside clubs when they'd had too much to drink and were dehydrated, and doing lots of other practical acts of love. Those are good things to do, but they are not evangelism. All you can work out from someone doing nice things is this is a nice person. If it teaches anything, it will be a gospel that Christians are morally good, and so you have to try really hard to be morally good. That is not the gospel of Jesus. For people to understand why Jesus came, words have to be spoken.

Sadly, this is often at best only *part* of what churches see as evangelism. In the Church of England's 'Five marks of mission', as well as proclaiming the good news of the

It's not possible to communicate a message without words. Actions might adorn the gospel, but actions themselves can't be the gospel.

kingdom, there are other things such as loving service, changing society and renewing the life of the earth. This is what I would describe as 'mission creep'. They are good things to do – and Christians have always worked to serve others and transform society – but those are the consequences, or the fruits, of the gospel preached. They're not in themselves evangelism.

If the gospel is a message, what is it a message about?

A message about what happened in history

'Now, brothers and sisters,' Paul begins in 1 Corinthians 15:1, 'I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you.' That gospel was: 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Paul goes on to describe how many people witnessed this.

The gospel is about things that actually happened, that people saw happen, as was promised in the Scriptures. God promised it, it happened, and it was witnessed.

We don't always include the 'witnessed' part when we explain the gospel, but it is very important. Jesus isn't just a religious concept or a mythological figure. He is a person who walked on the earth historically. This was a message that was attached to events, objective and independent of the person. It's not a matter of spiritual preference or taste. Events are stubbornly objective, they either happened or they didn't happen, irrespective of whether

Prayer Diary: October – November

23 Pray for the ministry of Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships, that evangelical Anglicans might be united in the gospel and work together.

24 Stanstead* (St Eds & Ips) – Vacancy.

25 Pray for Regional Directors Tony Cannon and Chris Moore to be effective in supporting gospel ministry across the country, and to work well with local and regional networks.

26 Stapenhill, Immanuel (Derby) – P-in-C, Philip Bosher.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy.
Psalm 16:11

27 Pray for Rob Munro to be faithful and godly in all his responsibilities as Bishop of Ebbsfleet. Pray for complementarian ministers and churches to be well-supported by his work.

28 Stapenhill, St Peter (Derby).

29 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, St John's, Knutsford in the Diocese of Chester, and the Vicar Nigel Atkinson.

30 Stirchley* (Lichfield) – Team Rector, Joanna Farnworth.

31 Pray for a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflicts in war-torn areas of the world. For the displaced and the suffering, for a peaceful and just outcome, and for believers to be sustained and a light to the nations.

November

1 Stoke Ash with Thwaite* (St Eds & Ips) – Vacancy.

2 Pray for Church Society publications, in particular the quarterly publications, *Crossway* and *The Global Anglican*. Also that our books, articles, and online resources would be edifying and useful to the church.

3 Streatham Park (Southwark) – Vicar, Marc Richeux.

The gospel itself is a simple word about an event in history, Jesus died and was raised, that entails his coronation as Lord and king, and offers us forgiveness with justice.

you believe them. The Battle of Hastings won't unhappen just because somebody thinks differently about Norman politics. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is about something that happened, regardless of how you feel about spirituality. As the witnesses saw, Jesus died for our sins, and is alive.

The gospel is about Jesus as king and Lord

This gospel isn't *primarily* about forgiveness. It is first of all about Jesus risen and crowned king of all. This means that we can be forgiven, but a lot of the New Testament doesn't immediately draw that out. Romans 1:3–4 tells us about Jesus who was promised, who was descended from the royal line, and who at the resurrection was declared to be the Son of God in power. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached bluntly: you killed him, God raised him, now he's Lord and king of the universe, and you're in enormous trouble. Peter doesn't even mention forgiveness! In Acts 13, the coronation psalm (Psalm 2) is quoted, and we're told that God fulfilled it at the resurrection of Jesus, when he was appointed Lord and king of the universe. Christians, fundamentally, are people who think Jesus is right and that he's in charge. The only kind of gospel Christian is a Christian who submits to what Jesus says.

The gospel means that there is justice

Cheap forgiveness, God just letting people off because he's too soft to do anything about evil, isn't very attractive. In fact, it's only possible for us to forgive others if there is ultimate justice. When you forgive somebody you're not saying 'I don't really mind that evil happened.' It is right for perpetrators of evil to be punished. How wonderful to have a forgiveness that doesn't come at the expense of justice like this. When we know there is justice, we can relax. We don't need to judge others nor fear the judgment of others, for this has all been taken care of. Justice will be done. The twenty-first century has become hugely judgmental, censorious and reproachful, so that we walk in fear of saying the wrong thing, using the wrong language, expressing the wrong attitude and so on. It is a consequence of the loss of a sense of God's justice. But forgiveness without it being at the expense of justice is at the heart of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

The gospel is all God's work

In order for grace to be really grace, it has to be entirely from God's side and not from mine, because we are dead in sin. It's not enough for God just to offer me a salvation that I then have to take hold of, because I don't want to take hold of it. On the contrary, I'm running away from it, and so God has to make the first move.

In John chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he can't enter the kingdom of heaven unless he's born again. This is not just a particular style of Christian. Fundamentally a born again Christian (actually the only kind of Christian) is one whose life comes from someone else. That's why Jesus uses the analogy of birth, because we were extremely passive in our own births. Jesus says it's true of spirit birth as well. We can't make our own spiritual birth happen, it has to come by the

‘Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life’.

John 5:24

Holy Spirit. What’s more, you can observe the work of the Holy Spirit, but you can’t control it. ‘The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit’ (John 3:8). With these two analogies, being born and weather forecasting, Jesus is talking about things that are not in our control. Similarly, our spiritual life comes at the initiative of God.

How does that happen? ‘Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life’ (John 5:24). This takes us back to our starting point. New birth comes through a message, through Jesus’ *word*. The gospel is a message, something you can write in a letter, or you can speak over coffee, or you can sign with sign language. You *can’t do it* non-verbally. The adornments of the gospel – helping the poor, being motivated to steward creation and so on, are consequences and fruits of the gospel. The gospel itself is a simple word about an event in history, Jesus died and was raised, that entails his coronation as Lord and king, and offers us forgiveness with justice. If someone so much as hears that word and trusts it, then they cross over from death to life.

Andrew Sach serves part-time at Grace Church Greenwich, and part-time as a tutor on the Cornhill Training Course.

Prayer Diary: November

4 Pray for clergy who face opposition and difficulty in their parish, and from the wider church, to remain faithful.

5 Stretton-en-le-Field (Leicester) – Vacancy.

6 Summerstown, St Mary (Southwark) – Vicar, James Fletcher. Give thanks for our partnership with London City Mission and the door knocking we have been doing, and for people joining our church through this. Please pray for leaders – we are especially light on people in their 40s, 50s and 60s, and are in real need of them. For finances which don't cover what we need them to. And for our dependence on God.

7 Pray for the St Antholin Lecture today, with Rachel Ciano.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
Colossians 1:15

8 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's pastoral advisers for women: Ros Clarke, Eleanor Hayden and Annabel Heywood. Pray that they will be effective in their support of women in ministry, ministry wives and other complementarian women.

9 Surbiton Hill, Christ Church (Southwark) – Vicar, John Shepherd. Please pray for Christ to be lifted up and people in our parish to be drawn to him; for God’s financial provision; for ministry in the school; for faithful biblical, Spirit-filled preaching and for love to abound.

10 Pray for the Network of Revitalisation Ministries (NoRM) run by our regional directors. Pray it will encourage ministers in revitalisation work to have perseverance, faithfulness, patience and grace. Pray for fellow-workers to join them, and for many hearts to be rekindled in love for the Lord.

11 Talke, St Martin (Lichfield) – Vacancy.

12 Pray for Kirsten Birkett’s work as Publications Manager to be prayerful and biblical.

Is there anyone who can't be saved?

Kev Murdoch reminds us that the story of Zacchaeus shows God is much more willing to save than we give him credit for.

Simon came to speak to our church a couple of years ago. He'd been a policeman, but he realised there was more money to be made in *becoming* a thief rather than spending your time *catching* them. Simon was very honest about the lost individual he was at that time. Immersed in a life of crime, adultery, he left his wife just when she needed him the most. And then he had an encounter with Jesus. He had a career change when he became a criminal, and then a life change when he became a Christian.

When Jesus meets Zacchaeus, he gives one of the clearest mission statements in the whole of the gospels: 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10). Luke is telling us that this *is* Jesus' mission, that it really works to save the unlikeliest of lost people (including us!) and that we are no fools to throw ourselves behind his great cause. We're not asking Jesus to get on board with our agenda. We're trying to stay on track with his.

Jesus came to save the lost

Zacchaeus was the same kind of lost character as Simon the bent copper. He was a tax collector. That's enough information in itself to mean he'd have been unfollowed and de-friended, hashtag 'sinner'. Moreover, he was a *chief* tax collector. Don't feel sorry for him and think he was simply obeying orders – he'd well and truly climbed the greasy pole. And he was *wealthy*, probably through creaming off an extra percentage from the people as a nice fraudulent bonus. In his own words in verse 8, he was a cheat.

Zacchaeus is often portrayed as a lovable rogue, but if you happened to live in *his* tax district you would be struggling to pay the bills. He was closer to the paedophile or rapist. But lost people like Zacchaeus are exactly who Jesus has come seeking out.

A few minutes before Jesus came by, probably other locals passed that sycamore tree. The kind of things they were saying and thinking as they looked up probably wouldn't be printable. But *Jesus* looks up and sees an individual desperately in need of salvation. The Son of Man, the one with all authority over all people for all time, stepped down off his throne in heaven and walked in the front door of grubby little Zacchaeus' house. Jesus sums up what's happened: 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham' (Luke 19:9). This man who seemed a million miles from God, *he too* is a son of Abraham, Bible royalty. He has all the promises, privileges, the seat at God's family dinner table for all eternity.

Jesus can do miracles

This is a section of Luke where Jesus is asked repeatedly about the kingdom of God. The kingdom will come one day in all its glory, and it will be spectacular. But right now, Jesus is seeking and saving the lost. In other words, he's doing miracles. Even with a 'good' rich

ruler, Jesus has just said salvation was humanly impossible. Zacchaeus is a *bad* rich ruler. But he welcomes Jesus, and as a mark of his repentance does precisely what the 'good' rich couldn't. A camel has just walked through the eye of a needle. This is the truly spectacular miracle.

Be certain, Theophilus, Luke is saying. This *is* kingdom stuff. This is the heart of what Jesus is about in the era we live in.

Could it happen where we are?

When we come back to our own communities, it's hard to see it. There's never as much fruit as we would like. How committed *is* Jesus to reaching *my* community? How much does he care? Luke tells us that this is the whole reason why Jesus came.

Zacchaeus' testimony captures what Jesus has just been saying about the who and the how of becoming a Christian. In Zacchaeus we see all the ingredients of salvation: the scandal of mercy to the sinner, the miracle of what's humanly impossible, the spiritually blind called out of darkness. That's Zacchaeus' story, but it is also our story. We may not have been dodgy tax collectors, but we may have things in our relationship history or browsing history that make us deeply ashamed. What would the people walking past the sycamore tree say of us, if they could see every detail from our past seven days? How much would they have to watch before they started grumbling 'sinner'? How much would they need to see before they'd be shocked that Jesus would ever want to be a guest at *your* house?

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Pray with us...

If you are a Church Society member and would like to receive the fortnightly **members' prayer diary** by email (if you don't already), please contact the office: admin@churchsociety.org.

This prayer diary is also posted daily in the members' prayer group on Facebook, and on the members' prayer feed on Prayermate. Let us know if you would like access to either of these.

Our **public prayer diary** is also available on Prayermate, as well as on our Twitter and Facebook streams. You also can find a printed version of this in *Crossway*.

We hold a **regular monthly members-only prayer meeting on Zoom**, on the first Thursday of every month from 4–5 pm. The next prayer meeting will be on Thursday 3 October.

If you would like to join us for these but haven't received information about them, please contact the office to ensure that you are on the right mailing list! We also post the link in the members' prayer group on Facebook.

There is no-one too crooked or too post-Christian or too woke. No-one too eccentric or too addicted. There are no human lies and brokenness beyond Jesus' power to reach out and forgive.

Or are we like the mutterers?

It's clear as Luke ends his Gospel that he wants us to be certain enough to get behind the great cause. Yet some people don't, as we see in verse 7: 'All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."'

The mutterers are disgusted that Jesus should accept hospitality from someone like Zacchaeus. And in some ways they're right: Jesus doesn't pretend Zacchaeus was anything other than hopelessly lost and needed to change. But the grumblers need to understand that the Son of Man came to hunt out lost people *exactly like* this rotten tax collector. It's the whole reason he's here. They are not that different from our cancel culture that's so quick to ostracise. Of course it's good when prejudice and injustice are called out, but we are self-righteous when we forget we *all* deserve to be cancelled.

A Christian response in a woke generation should be very distinctive. We should be quick to say that the big problem is lostness, and the big need of that offensive person or group is salvation ... *as is mine*. In other words, will we see people through the eyes of Jesus. We won't be motivated to reach anyone without his worldview in place. Hence, we need to keep being built up in the gospel ourselves.

And then will we throw ourselves behind *his* mission plan?

Get behind the mission plan

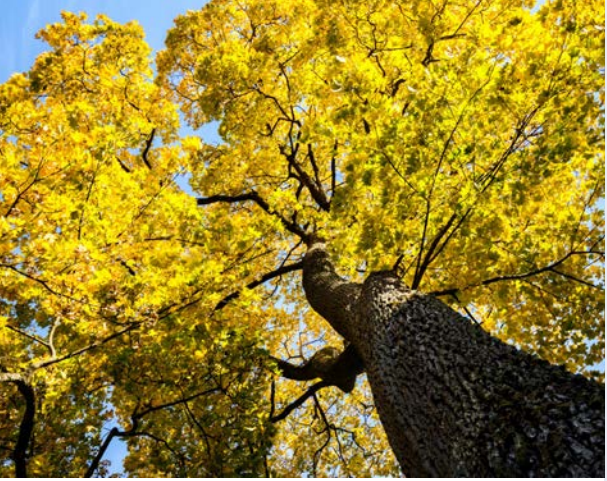
The story of Zacchaeus sums up a great missional pattern that develops through the whole of Luke and into Acts. The initiative is Jesus'; the momentum is outward, reaching further and further to find the lost; the call is clear – 'repent'; and the result, as with Zacchaeus, is repeatedly gladness and joy.

We're not trying to ruin anyone's life by encouraging them to consider Christ – we're trying to bring them to joy!

That's the story of Luke/Acts, as individuals, families and towns have their lives and eternities transformed. It's the story of the last two thousand years as every category of off-the-rails weirdos repent. Lost unclean people in every single nation on the planet have been gripped by an encounter with the Son of Man, and it hasn't stopped. There is no-one too crooked or too post-Christian or too woke. No-one too eccentric or too addicted. There are no human lies and brokenness beyond Jesus' power to reach out and forgive.

It will always be hard for churches to keep looking out the window to the lost, for we also rightly recognise the need to focus on building up believers. There is plenty of brokenness *inside* the church. And not all our roles and opportunities in the body are the same. But as a body, the New Testament does not give us permission to choose between 'reach' or 'build'. We need a vision for build *and reach* to be on track with Jesus' mission.

If the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost, how is that mission to the lost shaping your diary? The life of your church? How is that shaping the choices you make on the finance committee and PCC? If the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost, how is that shaping who we encourage prayer for in our small groups?



Too often we're afraid, too overwhelmed with life, too worn down by knockbacks to reach out. Christians need permission to keep it real. Some folk imagine everyone at church must be a barnstorming evangelist, when their struggle is even to tell their workmates they're a Christian. Let's air the anxieties, remind each other why the Son of Man came and do it prayerfully together.

And let us not be like the grumblers. We probably don't mutter when unlikely people become Christians – we're usually glad. But we can share the grumblers' lack of vision for who Jesus is for: 'He's too much of a lad to be interested'; 'She's had a lot of relationships...'; 'Never them – too *rich*'.

Imagine in your head the person *you'd* be most surprised to find at church. What is it about them? Too… what? Today salvation can come to this dysfunctional family, those promiscuous halls of residence, that deeply secular office. Even they could become a child of Abraham.

There is plenty of lostness as we look around the nation. But the great news is that there's a Son of Man. And he came to seek and save the lost.

Kev Murdoch is Vicar of Euston Church, London.

Prayer Diary: November

13 Tewkesbury, Holy Trinity (Gloucester) – Vicar, Stephen Walker. We give thanks for the initiative of the Welcome Table every other Monday at which anyone from the community can come to receive a hot meal in a warm space, and for the small discussion group that is exploring faith in Jesus. Please pray for our Children and Youth Pastors and their teams that they may be well supported and resourced for all the opportunities they have for discipling our children and reaching out to the local schools.

14 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, St Mark's, Little Common, Bexhill-on-Sea in the Diocese of Chichester, and the Rector Jonathan Frais. Pray that the Lord would increase our delight in his word, causing us to meditate on his ways daily, and making us like a tree planted by streams of the life-giving water flowing from Christ.

15 Tollard Royal* (Salisbury) – Vacancy.

16 Please pray for Ros Clarke in her part-time secondment to the Bishop of Ebbsfleet as one of his Pastoral Advisers for Women. Pray that this time will be used well to strengthen women's ministry in complementarian parishes.

Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. John 15:5

17 Uphill, Weston-Super-Mare, St Nicholas (Bath & Wells) – Vicar, Mark Madeley. Thanksgiving for spiritual and numerical growth, but praying for wisdom as regards future decisions for the parish.

18 Pray for the Latimer Trust and its publications ministry.

19 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board which is meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes. For Paul Darlington as Chairman.

20 Pray for evangelicals to be engaged in the synods and committees of the Church of England, for the sake of the gospel. Pray especially for those serving on General Synod.

Is it worth being a Christian?

Andrew Towner reflects on why being a Christian is worth it – because Jesus is worthy.

Why do we bother?

Helen Roseveare was a medical missionary in the Congo, who underwent appalling suffering during her time there. Most of us will be nowhere near the Congo, and never undergo that kind of suffering. Yet even for us, the thought occurs – is it worth it? Why are we bothering with this?

Is being a Christian worth it? Some people appear to answer 'no'. It can seem that being a Christian is hard work. Just getting up every Sunday, faithfully making it to church when you would rather be relaxing, is hard enough. The numbers of people willing to be on rotas or teams, or even attending weekly at church, seem to keep dropping. When it comes to evangelism, it's not just hard, it can be scary. Opposition can be strong from a so-called 'liberal' culture that is actually very illiberal. So, is it worth it, committing to being at church, to serving, and to reaching out with the gospel?

Helen Roseveare gave a surprising answer to this question. Wonderfully, she says that it's the wrong question – a natural question, but wrong. The real question is, 'Is *he* worthy?' The answer is an overwhelming 'yes'!

As Colin Buchanan puts it, 'Who he is and what he's done make Jesus number one.' This is a brilliantly simple summary of extremely deep truths. 'Who he is' takes us to doctrines of the person of Christ, the God-Man Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human. 'What he's done' takes us to the work of Christ, as the perfect Messiah, the anointed one, who reveals God, brings sinners like us to God, and rules God's world. Being a Christian is serving *him*, our glorious saviour.

Who he is: fully God, fully man

In Philippians 2:5–11, Paul wants people to have a changed mindset. He wants us to be likeminded, shaped by Jesus' selfless sacrificial actions. So Paul teaches us about the incarnation: that Jesus is fully God in his nature, but he humbled himself, making himself nothing by taking on human nature. The eternal Son didn't stop being fully God, but took on flesh as he became Jesus born on earth.

Just think about the humility that required. If the greatest archangel had done this, it would require great humility. If the Eternal Son had become the greatest human leader, that would have taken great humility. But we are talking about the transcendent, infinite God becoming flesh and making himself nothing. More than that – Jesus humbled himself all the way to the cross, a death of horror and shame. For this reason he was raised from death to exalted glory.

Notice how Paul speaks of the person of Christ. He was fully God, eternally, taking on flesh. This is one of our great doctrines and a great reality. The person of Christ is totally God and totally man, not a hybrid. He's not a human with God's brain or some such thing. No, in this 'totally God, totally man' person Jesus Christ,

‘He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them’.

Hebrews 7:25

we see both human nature and divine nature. He sleeps in a boat, even though God doesn’t sleep; that’s his human nature. He calms a storm where a human couldn’t; that’s his divine nature. Jesus both sleeps *and* calms the storm. He is a fully-integrated person, both human and God.

This Jesus, fully human and fully God, is the full final perfect revelation of God.

Discussions in the Church of England lately have called for a balance of grace and truth – which at first hearing sounds so wise, warm and balanced. But *Jesus Christ the God-man is perfectly full of both grace and truth.* If we move away from him in any way, we have less grace and less truth. We must stay with his perfect godly truth and grace, even in hard discussions. We cannot be more gracious or truthful than Jesus – can anyone? It is the height of tragic arrogance to try to revise or upgrade him. Of course we want to be quick to apologise if our stand for Jesus is ever without perfect Christlikeness. But we must not and should not apologise for sticking to his godly compassionate truth.

What he’s done: perfect Messiah

The Messiah means anointed one. There are three anointed offices in the Old Testament: prophet, priest and king. All three are united in Jesus Christ the God-man, for he fulfils all three.

A prophet speaks God’s truth – and Jesus speaks and reveals God fully. Jesus Christ is the prophet who brings the full final perfect revelation of God. He teaches ‘as one with authority’ because he is God. He not only

Prayer Diary: November

21 Upper Chelsea, St Simon, Zelotes (London) – Vicar, Mike Neville. Please pray for a project we are working on, to grow our evening service and congregation, in both depth and size. Please pray that the ideas that came from our recent consultations would, by God’s grace, be implemented for our good and his glory.

22 Wallington, Holy Trinity (Southwark) – Vicar, James Hills. Pray for our new Associate Vicar, Tom, recently started, for him settling in, and him to help us grow as a church in depth of our faith. For us to be willing to suffer for our faith as we seek to make Christ known both with those we seek to reach with the gospel and the suffering from within the CofE. For the Lord to raise up leaders for ministries, particularly children and youth, but for leading his church into the future.

23 Wallington, St Patrick (Southwark) – Vacancy.

24 Pray for the King and the Royal Family.

25 Pray for more evangelical bishops, deans and archdeacons. Particularly pray that complementarian evangelicals will be appointed to these senior positions.

26 Wandsworth, All Saints w Holy Trinity (Southwark) – Vicar, David Simpson. Please pray for repentance and faith for those attending Alpha this term. Please pray for more families to join the church from the area on the back of our Summer Holiday Club, the Light Party (Halloween alternative) and our forthcoming Christmas events.

27 Warboys (Ely) – Rector, Garry Dawson-Jones.

28 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, Hailsham Parish Church in the Diocese of Chichester, and the Vicar Rory Graham. Thank God for guests being with us Sunday by Sunday; pray for conversions. Please pray for us to grow in our love for Jesus and to make the most of the evangelistic opportunities that these months bring.

speaks God's truth but is God fully revealed (Colossians 1:15, 19). In evangelism, if people are arguing with the gospel, it's important to remember that they're arguing with Jesus, not us. That means we can relax – and pray.

A priest sacrifices to God, bringing people into his presence. Jesus did that once for all, and because he lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore 'he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them' (Hebrews 7:24–25). So we may have complete confidence to approach the throne. A king rules for God – and Jesus is risen to reign over the church, the world, and all eternity.

Thomas Aquinas saw all three truths in John 14:6. Jesus is the *way*, the priest on the cross, the priestly king of Philippians 2, offering himself, risen because of his glorious sacrificial saving humility. He is the *truth*, the prophet revealing God, the kingly Prophet of John 4 and 7 – offering living water to any who ask, whomever is thirsty. He is also the *life*, as risen Lord of the church, the prophetic priest of John 2 and 13 – teaching of his once-for-all death, his body the new temple. Jesus' work is one united work to live, die and rise 'for us and for our salvation'.

Is it worth it?

Helen Roseveare has reminded us of the real question: is *he* worthy? If we look at Revelation 5, we see that at the centre of the control room of history, there's a terrible heart-stopping pause when God's perfect plan for the universe cannot proceed because there is no one worthy to open the scroll. John weeps. But Jesus Christ the Lion and the Lamb is worthy – he and he alone! He is power and love; for without love, power would be terrifying, and without power, love would be useless.

Jesus Christ is the God-man, the Messiah who speaks and reveals God, who died and intercedes, who reigns in glory. Is there any goodness, any blessing, any perfection you cannot find in him? As has been said before, Jesus is God above all: King of kings, Lord of lords, higher than highest heaven, greater than the greatest angel, totally beyond us. His rule is total, his knowledge boundless, his wisdom perfect. His riches are immense and inexhaustible; his majesty unbearable.

But there is no one too low for Jesus to look at. He stoops to talk to angels; even further to talk to humans. He stoops not just to princes but also to lepers. He stoops not just to know them but to befriend them, and lower even still: to be spat on, mocked, whipped and crucified. He washed our feet at the cross – what could be humbler than that?

The Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards wrote:

> In Jesus Christ, meet infinite highness and infinite condescension,
> infinite justice and infinite grace,
> infinite glory and lowest humility,
> infinite majesty and transcendent meekness,
> deepest reverence toward God and equality with God,
> worthiness of good and greatest patience under suffering of evil,
> greatest spirit of obedience and supreme dominion over heaven and earth
> absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation
> self-sufficiency and entire trust and reliance on God.

Have no doubts about our Saviour – he is worthy!

Andrew Towner is Vicar of Houghton and Kingmoor (Carlisle) and serves as Chair of Church Society Council.

Fellowship of Word and Spirit Conference

Strangers in the world:

Persevering in a culture that has rejected God

Speakers

Kirsten Birkett
Neil Robbie
Keith Sinclair
Rob Wood

3rd – 5th February 2025
The Hayes, Swanwick

More details and booking form at churchsociety.org

Prayer Diary: November–December

29 Washfield* (Exeter) – Team Rector, Stephanie Gordon-Jeffs.

30 Pray for the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), the Anglican Network in Europe (ANiE), and the Anglican Convocation in Europe (ACE), that God's kingdom may grow through their work.

December

1 Wath (Leeds) – Rector, James Gwyn-Thomas.

2 Pray for churches with close links to schools, that they may be effective in presenting the gospel clearly, particularly over the Christmas season.

3 Wembdon, St George (Bath & Wells) – Vicar, Ed Moll. We give thanks for our work among children and young people, which is growing steadily. We pray for the resources to support this work, especially the appointment of a worker to lead the ministry to young people.

4 Pray for greater evangelical witness in our cathedrals and churches over the Christmas period.

5 Pray for the *Global Anglican* editorial Board meeting today – for excellent resources to be produced. Peter Jensen as Editor, Kirsten Birkett as Managing Editor, and Lee Gatiss as Chairman.

The word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.
2 Samuel 22:31

6 Weybread* (St Eds & Ips) – Rector, Susan Loxton. Give thanks for the ongoing upkeep of the church. We have an aging congregation; pray for new people to come and join us.

7 Wharton, Christ Church (Chester) – Vicar, Chris Pierce.

8 Pray for those who don't usually go to church but will attend carol services during the Christmas season, that they will hear the gospel and respond.

9 Whinburgh* (Norwich) – P-in-C, Tim Weatherstone.

NEW feature – Church Partner profile

St Luke's Wolverhampton

What is your parish like?

St Luke's is on the south side of Wolverhampton, with a parish population of 11,500 (over 50 per cent of whom are of South Asian Sikh or Hindu background), and with fairly high levels of deprivation.

In recent years we have seen significant immigration from various African countries, especially Nigeria.

The church has had a complementarian evangelical ministry for many years. Our main congregation averages between fifty and sixty people most Sundays. We meet in the church primary school, pictured above, next to the former parish church which closed in 2017. An ageing and dwindling congregation meets in Pond Lane Mission – a 'tin tabernacle'!

What is bringing you joy lately in your parish?

- The ethnic diversity, gospel unity, and caring fellowship seen in the main St Luke's congregation.
- Good numbers of families with children, mainly of primary school age.
- Younger church members getting involved on our PCC and in ministry on Sundays, for example, leading prayers.
- Unity on the PCC concerning the present challenges facing the denomination.

What can we pray for you?

- We want to become a more prayerful church, with better attendance at monthly prayer meetings.
- We plan to appoint a church administrator in the near future, and we need to do more to train up future lay leaders, especially men.
- In September we will be expanding Junior Church from one group to two, to enable us to continue including those in Year 7.
- As Vicar I need wisdom in preparing the church for my expected retirement in four–five years' time.

Richard Espin-Bradley, Vicar

Vicar Richard Espin-Bradley and his wife Libby (centre), and Assistant Minister Foluso Adedipe and his wife Stella

Pond Lane Mission

Church Society

EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE GOD'S WORD

Join us...

Partner Churches commit to praying, contending and contributing financially to the work of Church Society. They also receive a welcome package and discounted rates for our publications and conferences.

Partner churches (formerly known as Supporter Churches) can also call on Church Society for advice and support for their minister, PCC and wardens, e.g. during an interregnum.

Partner churches get a badge to display on their websites and a printed certificate to display in their buildings.

More information is on the Church Society website: **churchsociety.org**

New Partner Churches
All Souls, Eastbourne, Diocese of Chichester (pictured)
Christ Church, Wharton, Diocese of Chester

Prayer Diary: December

10 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church Warbleton Parish Church in the Diocese of Chichester, and the Rector Marc Lloyd. Please pray that we would make the most of all the gospel opportunities over the Christmas season.

11 Wimborne, St John (Salisbury) – Vicar, Peter Breckwoldt.

12 Pray for chaplains in hospitals, hospices, the armed forces and other organisations.

13 Pray for the ministry of Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships, that evangelical Anglicans might be united in the gospel and work together in contending for the truth of God's word.

14 Woking (Old), St Peter (Guildford) – P-in-C, Jonathan Thomas.

…he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8.

15 Pray for the Government and the influence of Christians in Parliament.

16 Wolverhampton, St Luke (Lichfield) – Vicar, Richard Espin-Bradley. We want to become a more prayerful church (e.g. better attendance at monthly prayer meetings), we plan to appoint a church administrator in the near future, and we need to do more to train up future lay leaders, especially men. As Vicar I need wisdom in preparing the church for my expected retirement in four to five years' time.

17 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes. For Paul Darlington as Chairman.

18 Pray for the Priscilla Programme students who have just completed a module. Pray that what they have learned will help them to grow in godliness and minister to others. Pray for applications and enrolments for the Priscilla Programme next term. Pray for the right seminar leaders to be available for the growing numbers on the course.

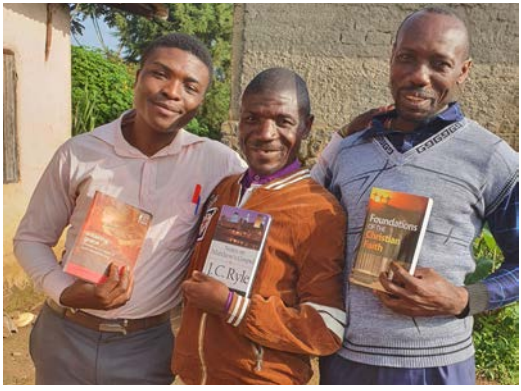
Equipping Pastors Worldwide

Equipping Pastors Worldwide supports majority-world pastors who long to be faithful in serving the Lord Jesus Christ, but who are lacking the training and resources to do so. The organisation was born from a merger of the Pastor Training International and Christian Books Worldwide charities. Over the last fifteen years, these charities have been privileged to serve thousands of pastors in regions where the church has grown hugely but where there is great material need.

The focus of Equipping Pastors Worldwide remains on providing quality training for pastors in expository preaching and providing free books to under-resourced pastors throughout the majority world. Over the years, they have also translated books into more than 41 languages, extending the reach of this important work to non-English speakers. Recently, they have sought to concentrate on establishing hubs in selected locations, working with trusted partners to train local trainers for the future and to more effectively manage their book distribution work.

We at Church Society are delighted to have an opportunity to support their work and provide resources to our global brothers and sisters and we are inviting you to join us. Church Society will be sending a number of books from our stock in the office, but we also want to include a good range of our newer and most popular books. If you would like to help us, please check the Books for Christmas section in the Church Society online shop.

For more information, see **epworldwide.org** and **www.churchsociety.org/shop**



Equipping Pastors WORLDWIDE

Vacancies & appointments

Church Society Trust holds the rights of patronage for a number of benefices in the Church of England. To find out more about the current vacancies, or to apply, please see churchsociety.org/vacancies.

Appointments

Revd Jon Tattersall, Vicar, St John the Baptist, Harborne, Diocese of Birmingham

Revd Richard Marshall, Vicar, St John's, Over, Winsford, Diocese of Chester (pictured)

Revd Ollie Osborn, Vicar, St Patrick's Wallington, Diocese of Southwark

Prayer Diary: December

19 Woodham Walter (Chelmsford) – P-in-C, Julie Willmot.

20 Pray for clergy (both unemployed and employed) looking for posts.

21 Pray for the ministry of readers and the responsibilities of churchwardens and members of PCCs.

22 Worthing, Holy Trinity (Chichester) – Vacancy.

23 Pray for aged and infirm Christians with limited opportunities for Christian fellowship, and those who care for them.

24 Pray for gospel clarity at midnight services, and for open hearts to respond.

25 For clear gospel presentation at Christmas Day services, for Christians to appreciate afresh God's salvation.

26 Pray for churches in the Anglican Communion facing persecution in countries openly hostile to Christianity.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12

27 Pray for the Anglican Primates, that they would be faithful to the Scriptures under the pressures they face.

28 Worthing, St Matthew (Chichester) – Vicar, Paul Taylor.

29 Pray today for Church Society Partner Church, All Soul's, Eastbourne in the Diocese of Chichester, and the Associate Vicar Stephen Finch.

30 Worthing, St George (Chichester) – Vicar, John Brook.

31 Pray for the work of Affinity in connecting evangelicals across denominations in the UK. For Anglican evangelicals to have good relationships with non-Anglicans. For Lee Gatiss on their Advisory Council.

Thank you for praying with us.

* Indicates that the Trust's parish is part of a larger benefice.

The prayer diary items above are also accessible via the PrayerMate app: http://praynow4.org/churchsociety.

Crossway

Autumn 2024/173
Editor: Kirsten Birkett

Crossway is the quarterly magazine of Church Society and is available free to members of the Society. For details of how to become a member, please check our website or contact us using the details listed below.

Crossway is also available by annual subscription. Our 2024 rates, which include postage, are:
UK: £10
Overseas: £17

Individual copies are available from Church Society at £1.50 plus postage. If you place an order of 10 or more copies, we will send them to you postage free.

Church Society (Dean Wace House)
Ground Floor, Centre Block
Hille Business Park
132 St Albans Road
Watford WD24 4AE

Tel 01923 255410
Web churchsociety.org
Email admin@churchsociety.org

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THE Global Anglican

Established in 1879 as *The Churchman*

The Global Anglican

The September 2024 issue of *The Global Anglican*, an international theological journal produced quarterly by Church Society, is now out:

- Editorial – 'The Assurance Deficit.'
  Peter Jensen
- 'The Theological "Wit", Pastoral Wisdom and Gospel Witness of Nicholas Ridley (1500–1555).'
  Graeme Howells
- 'I believed, Therefore I Have Spoken: Thomas Valpy French (1825–1891).'
  Vaughan Roberts
- 'Not Individualism, but Individuality Within Community: Personal Identity for Autistic Christians.'
  Ben Somervell

Making a bequest to Church Society

Here is a convenient form of words which can be used to make a bequest to Church Society in your Will:
'I GIVE the residue of my estate / the sum of _____ pounds (£) to CHURCH SOCIETY of Ground Floor, Centre Block, Hille Business Park, 132 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 4AE and I DIRECT that the receipt of the Administrator or other proper officer of Church Society shall be good and sufficient discharge to my Executor.'

Church Society
EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE GOD'S WORD