

Dear friends

I hope you are well, and enjoying this spell of lovely weather. I took advantage of the sunshine to take some photos of the gorgeous snowdrops, crocuses, and daffodils in Baxterley Churchyard, which I have used as the backdrop to the hymns for today's service. I also filmed parts of the service in the vicarage garden - watch carefully and you may see our cat Arya making an unscheduled guest appearance!

<https://youtu.be/GBuUnqCHmdg>



A Service for the Second Sunday of Lent

An Act of Worship from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Parishes for the Second Sunday of Lent (28th February 2021), with a reflection by Revd Carole on ...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/GBuUnqCHmdg)

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday, we are in a better position to make at least provisional plans for the next few months. I know many of you have been looking forward to returning to worship in the church buildings, and we shall be making that return gradually, starting with a service in two weeks' time for Mothering Sunday, at Kingsbury at 11am. The following week (21 March) we shall be at Merevale at 11am and Baxterley at 4.30pm, and then restarting weekly services at Wood End at 9.30am on Wednesday 24 March. Services for Holy Week and Easter will be finalised this week, and I will include the details in next week's mailings, but I am looking forward to being able to have Easter services in all our churches. However, I must emphasise that we must continue to be careful. The online services will continue, and nobody should feel under any pressure to attend in person, and of course those who do should observe all our guidelines for being as covid secure as possible. Sadly, this means not having our usual friendly conversations after the service, but sticking to a wave and a smile from behind our masks!

Attached to this email are various documents that you may find helpful, including the weekly newsletter, the text of Revd Carole's reflection, the material for this week's Lent Reflections session (do join in on Zoom on Wednesday if you are able to), and the daily readings and reflections on Mark's Gospel that I have been posting each day on the Facebook page.

With my continuing prayers and blessings for a Holy Lent

John

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Reflection on Mark 8. 31-end for 28-2-21 (Lent 2)

Today's Gospel reading is about investing in the Kingdom of God. Let me try to explain...

Jesus tells his disciples of the 'roadmap' of suffering, rejection, death and resurrection that he will have to endure. Peter is disturbed by the 'roadmap' and thinks Jesus shouldn't be telling them these things – Peter doesn't want them to happen; doesn't want what is being said to be true. Jesus tells Peter that he has his sights set on earthly things instead of divine things. He is calling Peter to change his outlook, to change his way of living and thinking. Jesus has the same call to us too.

Where have we got our sights set? On earthly or divine things? Where do we invest our energies and our love? In 'tomorrow' or in 'forever'?

Probably all our energy and love at the moment is focussed on Boris Johnson's 'Roadmap' out of the pandemic – when will we be face-mask free, when can we visit and give our loved ones a proper hug, when will life get to a state of reasonable normality again? A lot is dependent on how many people take up the offer of the vaccine and how many people continue to socially distance for the time being for the safety of all. There will of course always be the few who spoil it for the many, but if the majority of us play our part, there is hope and light at the end of this particular tunnel. Fingers crossed and prayers ascending for all the 'not before' dates to actually be 'the' dates when restrictions can slowly be lifted. We want all the dates to be true. They give us a sense of the joy of the freedom to come. All of this is investing our energies in 'tomorrow', though the sense of the joy of the freedom to come can also be said if we invest our energies in 'forever' as well. When God's kingdom comes, there will be much joy and freedom and it will be forever, not just until the next world disaster comes along.

When this particular tomorrow of the pandemic comes, what then? Will we go back to our old way of living as quickly as we can, or will we change as Jesus calls us to do? Will we begin to invest our energies in 'forever' instead? Investing in the kingdom of heaven? For that, as Christians, is our ultimate goal, and an ultimate goal of good news that we are called to spread as far and as wide as we are able.

So what should our next 'roadmap' look like? And really, shouldn't this be our 'roadmap' now rather than the next one? If we are truly to start living the life God intended by being more Christ-like, might it be a good idea to start now rather than later? The season of Lent is an ideal time. We think of giving things up in Lent, but perhaps we have given up enough already this past 12 months, so taking on a new way of living and thinking might just be the tonic we need.

This investing in the kingdom of God involves the use of some imagination. We are all capable of imagination even if we don't think we are. When we watch films or read books, we can get lost in the imagination of others. Now is the time for an imagination of our own. We get glimpses of God's kingdom on earth – a stunning view over countryside perhaps, when someone we don't know smiles at us when we are feeling low, the first snowdrops after a hard winter – there are many glimpses and we need to hold these in our imagination, take them to the next level and work out how we need to behave and think that would make God's kingdom be here on earth permanently for all to see all of the time. The more we let our imagination run free, the easier it

will be to change how we live and think, how we interact with our fellow humans regardless of race, colour, class. God made us in his image – the base of the word imagination – so imagine a world where we are all equal, all good and kind, all forgiving and let us work towards that image. It won't be easy, taking up our cross and following Jesus never has been nor ever will be easy, but if we can just get our mindset away from 'tomorrow' and look further ahead to the 'forever', then we will be at least half-way to entering the kingdom of God for real. By the grace of God, love and joy always win out in the end. The journey can be difficult, and we have choices to make along the way. Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem to be crucified because that was what he was called to do. Jesus calls us now to make that choice to follow him into the 'forever' kingdom of God.

Let us make that choice, use our imagination, and invest our time, energy and love in the divine of 'forever' rather than the earthly things of 'tomorrow'. Together we can!

Amen.

Keep Singing from Sarah

Hello again everyone

I hope you are keeping well and enjoying the sunshine.

Below are some music choices to accompany Sunday 28th Feb 2021. Numbers are as always for the orange book if you would like to follow the words.

70 - Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart - [SLANE-BE THOU MY VISION - YouTube](#)

752 - Will you come and follow me - [Will You Come And Follow Me - YouTube](#)

217 - God is love, let heaven adore him - [HYFRYDOL-GOD IS LOVE, LET HEAVEN ADORE HIM - YouTube](#)

756 - Ye servants of God - [Ye Servants Of God - YouTube](#)

Some extras...

Thuma mina (Send me, Lord) - [Thuma mina - YouTube](#)

From heaven you came - [From Heaven You Came \(The Servant King\) - YouTube](#)

The Call (Come, my Way) Vaughan Williams - [Vaughan Williams: The Call \(from Five Mystical Songs\) - YouTube](#)

Jesus, you are the way Rizza - [Jesus, You Are the Way - YouTube](#)

O nata lux B. Parry - [O Nata Lux \(SATB\) - YouTube](#)

Walk humbly with your God - [WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD \(SATB Choir\) - Anna Laura Page - YouTube](#)

The first week back after half term for the girls went well and we now have the prospect of only one more week of home schooling. In the next few days both girls will be learning to take home covid tests ready for phasing back into regular school. We do very much hope this all goes

smoothly and they can be back with their friends again very soon. Although I will very much miss my co-workers - returning to the office is still a long way off for me and I am intending to make the most of the company at home this week!

We have enjoyed the sunshine and being outside more and we are looking forward to getting into the garden properly. We have our potatoes chitting in egg boxes thanks to your advice. The girls have asked if today could be the day to have the first bbq of the year!! We will see

Sending you as always lots of thoughts, prayers and love
Stay safe and smiling and keep singing
Sarah, Tom, Emily and Phoebe xxxx