



Welcome to St. John's

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

MICKLEOVER

News Bulletin Sunday 10th March 2024

Services in our Churches – Mothering Sunday

10am At St. Johns – Parish Communion, streamed to Youtube, with Peter Walley leading and Clare Owen speaking.

Youtube link: <https://youtube.com/live/KIjNs7KrTM>

8am At All Saints Centre – Breakfast Church led by Zoe Bowles

10am At All Saints – Morning Worship with Mary Stauton Leading. and Brookfield School Choir visiting .

11am At St Andrews Radbourne – Holy Communion – Traditional Words led by Peter Walley.

Prayers during the week – Prayers at 8am Tuesday mornings, meeting on Zoom with the usual log in.

Wednesday Holy Communion – Holy Communion at All Saints 9.30am – followed by part three of Prayer Course 2.

All Saints Café Warm Space – Join us Wednesdays 10am-12noon for friendly chat and refreshments.

St John's Rest Stop Café Warm Space – On Friday mornings 10am- 1pm in the Link. Do join us for Tea/Coffee, friendly conversation, and delicious home-made cakes. Please join us after cafe to share a light lunch and then we will be providing a lent course called The Prayers of Jesus. Further information from Judi Witcomb on 07531495891.

Craft and Table Top Sale – 16th March – 10.00am to 1.00pm We will need volunteers to help set up on Friday 15th March, and to clear away after the sale on 16th . We will be having the usual book sale and donations for this will be very welcome. Please leave books in the vestry or at the back of church. Do then come and browse and buy on the day. Please let Joy or Richard know if you are able to help in any way. Thank you.

Padley – Demand for our emergency food parcels and hot meals has increased dramatically since the 'Cost of Living Crisis' began. Last year we provided over 21,000 meals, hot from our day centre or in one of the 2,467 food parcels we provided to people who needed help. Now we need your help more than ever to support those at risk of homelessness and poverty in Derby and Derbyshire. We especially need donations of: *Tinned soup, Tinned meat, Tinned fruit, custard, Cereal and UHT milk*. There is a full list of items in the link with details for where to take your donations.

Mickleover Singers Easter Concert – Viva la Musica - Saturday 23rd March, 7.30pm at St. Johns Church. The concert will be a celebration of music from around the world. £8 on the door, (Cash only) including light refreshments in the interval.

St Andrews Services in March - There will be a Holy Communion on Easter Sunday at 11am (in place of evening prayer on Palm Sunday). The two month services notice sheet has been corrected.

Who Let The Dads Out? – in All Saints Church Centre on Saturday 9th March at 8.15am.

Breakfast Church – in All Saints Church Centre on Sunday 10th March at 8am.

The Bible Comes Alive – at 10am at 12 Murray Rd. Monday 11th March. John 4,43-54 – The healing of the official's son. All Welcome. *Michael Huggett*

Go Ukelele Crazy – Friday 15th March, 6.30pm at Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall. Tickets £5 (under 16 free) includes tea or coffee. A raffle will also be held on the night. All proceeds to Derby City Mission.

Easter Crafting – at the All Saints Wednesday coffee morning starts on 13th March. Then on 20th and 27th March. The session is free and all are welcome.

Padley Donation Drive – Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Uttoxeter Road, 16th and 17th March 11am-12.30pm. Please bring food, toiletries and clothing but NO out of date or opened food, duvets, pillows, mattresses or furniture.

Collect for Mothering Sunday

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Readings this week

Ephesians 2: 1 – 10, John 3: 14 - 21

Readings Next Week

Hebrews 5: 5 -10, John 12: 20-33

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Lent 4 Talk by Clare Owen

“And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever Believes in him may have eternal life.”

What comes to mind when I say the word Serpent or Snake? Perhaps the word sends shivers down your spine, because you don't like snakes? Perhaps your reaction is quite the opposite because it triggers the memory of a much-loved pet? Maybe the image of a snake takes your mind to thoughts of snake charmers, or films about giant snakes trying to bite people or crush them? Perhaps the first image which springs to mind is the serpent in the garden of Eden, and the associations of serpents with temptation and the forces of evil? Most of these associations have one thing in common: they are not positive ones! So why does our Gospel reading begin by comparing what will happen to Jesus with Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness? To our twenty-first century eyes, this might at first appear to be a rather strange association. It is true that the image of a serpent, when discussed in Church, is often associated with temptation, but this is not the case here.

In a metal box I have at home there are a number of old badges which have significant sentimental value to me, as they previously belonged to different members of my family. There are the badges which I remember my mother wearing on her uniform when I was a child, and she went to work as a nurse. There is an old cap badge which my paternal grandfather wore during his army service. There are also the badges which my maternal grandfather wore, signifying which ships he sailed with during his Naval service, and one which signified that he was part of the crew of a landing craft on D Day. I remember being able to tell from a very early age which badge belonged to whom and why, because I knew how to read the symbols on each, and what in these particular instances they signified. In a similar way, the image of a serpent can have very different meanings, and if we are to understand this Gospel reading, we need to know which meaning of a serpent is being used here.

If you go into one of the shops at the National Memorial Arboretum you will find badges on sale which contain the image of a snake wrapped around a pole. These are badges of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and the Snake and pole were chosen to represent the RAMC because in the ancient world, the image of a snake and pole represented Asclepius, Greek god of Healing and Medicine. Because of this association, in the world in which Jesus grew up in, influenced as it was by Greek culture, that would have been the main association with the serpent and pole, and for early readers of the Gospel of John from a Gentile background, it is probable that healing which would have sprung immediately to mind when presented with the image of a serpent.

For early readers or listeners of our Gospel this morning who were of a Jewish background, the image would have immediately been recognisable as being taken from the Book of Numbers. This is the fourth book of the Hebrew Bible, and the fourth of the five books of the Pentateuch - The Torah, which form the foundation of Jewish Law. In the 24th chapter of the Book of Numbers, God sent a poisonous serpent amongst the people, and many people subsequently died. The people went to Moses and pleaded with him to intervene with God. As the people recognised that they had sinned by speaking against God, Moses prayed to God on behalf of the people. We are then told that 'The Lord Said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live'. So, Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.'

Because of these associations, the image of a serpent on a pole became identifiable throughout the ancient world as a symbol of healing, and it is this association which John is referencing in this Gospel passage. Not only that, the writer of the Gospel of John uses the phrase 'lifted up' twice, in quick succession, a phrase used by Jesus in chapter 12 of the same Gospel, when Jesus declared 'I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' By being lifted up during his crucifixion, Jesus becomes the one who will save all. By linking the bronze snake of Moses with Jesus, John is clearly identifying Jesus as the one who has come to fulfil the Hebrew Scriptures. Unlike the followers of Moses however, who looked upon the bronze snake to be healed in this world, we as Christians look upon Jesus, lifted up on the cross in his ultimate sacrifice, to receive ultimate healing and everlasting life. The serpent was also the symbol of wisdom in the ancient world, and as John goes on to explain in our reading, it is to Jesus whom we must turn to seek 'what is true', and to guide us in our actions.

We live in a world today where 'fake news' and attempts to deceive or circumvent the truth are commonplace. The choices we face when considering how to act, often appear incredibly complicated and difficult. When navigating these potential stumbling blocks, we must look to Jesus for guidance as to where the truth lies, and to guide us as to how to act. As highlighted by Paul in our reading from Ephesians, we have been 'created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life'. Lent is an opportunity to dwell in the teachings of Jesus, so that when faced with difficult decisions, we can focus upon his teachings and choose these good works and the path which leads to ultimate healing and everlasting life.