



Parish of  
**St Peter Woking**  
St Peter's · St Mark's · All Souls'



## Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October

Leader Welcome in the name of Christ.  
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you  
All **and also with you**

### Welcome

### Hymn 870 **Jesus is the name we honour**

Jesus is the name we honour;  
Jesus is the name we praise.  
Majestic Name above all other  
names,  
The highest heaven and earth  
proclaim  
That Jesus is our God.

*We will glorify,  
We will lift Him high,  
We will give Him honour and  
praise.  
(Repeat)*

Jesus is the name we worship;  
Jesus is the name we trust.  
He is the King above all other  
kings, let all creation stand and  
sing that Jesus is our God.

Jesus is the Father's splendour;  
Jesus is the Father's joy.  
He will return to reign in majesty,  
and every eye at last shall see that  
Jesus is our God

### Opening activity *The Tortoise and the Hare*

### Confession

Leader God our Father, we come to you in sorrow for our sins.  
For turning away from you, and ignoring your will for our lives;  
Father, forgive us:

All: **save us and help us.**

Leader For behaving just as we wish,  
without thinking of you;  
Father, forgive us:

All: **save us and help us.**

Leader For failing you by what we do,  
and think and say;  
Father, forgive us:

**All: save us and help us.**

Leader For letting ourselves be drawn away from you  
by temptations in the world about us;  
Father, forgive us:

**All: save us and help us.**

Leader For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;  
Father, forgive us:

**All: save us and help us.**

**Absolution** *(we are reminded that God forgives all who repent)*

*This or another absolution may be said*

Leader May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins,  
and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

**Collect** *(Prayer for the day)*

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us your gift of faith that,  
forsaking what lies behind and reaching out to that which is before, we  
may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of  
everlasting joy; through Jesus Christ your son our Lord, who is alive and  
reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**This time @University** Sally Holcombe

**Hymn 673 There is a Redeemer**

There is a redeemer  
Jesus God's own Son  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Holy One

*Thank you Oh my Father  
For giving us your Son  
And leaving your spirit till  
The work on earth is done*

Jesus my redeemer  
Name above all names  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Oh for sinners slain  
When I stand in glory  
I will see His face  
There I'll serve my King forever  
In that Holy place

## Bible readings

*Isaiah 53.1-5 – Moira Lemprière, St Mark's*

- <sup>1</sup> Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
- <sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
- <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
- <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.
- <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

*1 Corinthians 1.18-2.5 – Neville Pike, All Souls*

### **Christ crucified is God's power and wisdom**

<sup>18</sup>For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written:

‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’

<sup>20</sup>Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were

influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup>God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one may boast before him. <sup>30</sup>It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

<sup>31</sup>Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.’

<sup>1</sup>And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.

### Sermon – Jonathan **Worldly wise? 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5**

Can you think back to your childhood? For most of us it feels a long time ago! Do you remember sitting in front of the TV all morning on a wet day, feeling as miserable as the weather, and your mum saying ‘Come on, get your waterproofs and wellies on, let’s go for a walk.’ You think she is crazy. Why would you want to be going out in the rain when you could be watching Noel Edmond’s Multi-coloured swapshop? But you have to, so you slowly, grudgingly get changed and venture out. And before long you are splashing in the puddles, twirling your umbrella and having fun. And when you come home having had fresh air and a good time your mum says ‘That was fun wasn’t it?’ You don’t admit that it was, but you feel much better for it and you know, annoyingly, that your mum was right again!

Some things just don’t seem to make sense, at least at the time, do they? But later, usually with experience, we realise why. Last month we were looking at the apostle Paul’s life, his total dedication to proclaiming the good news of Jesus in all its fullness. During October and November we are looking at some of Paul’s key messages in his letters that are at the heart of the gospel, starting with generosity last week and today thinking about the power of the cross and how foolish it seems to many.

I’m sure most of us have experienced the apathy or looks of bewilderment or statement that we are mad when we explain to our non-Christian

friends why we are Christians and why the death of Jesus on the cross is so important to us. In an age of self-help and personal truth people can't understand why we need a saviour, especially a dead one who allegedly was God. It's total foolishness, but our friends are usually too polite to say so, though much of the media has no problem stating it indirectly or even directly.

And as we see from Paul's letter to the Corinthians it was the same 2000 years ago. In chapter 1 v20 he lists the wise (the philosophers of his day), the scribe (the Jewish scholar and wise academic), the debater (the orator with well reasoned argument); people who epitomised education, wisdom, knowledge and were the ones everyone looked up to, who thought they knew everything.

The Greeks were very reasoned people, famous for their philosophers who devised philosophies, which were essentially religious, that provided explanations of the universe and offered salvation through human reason and wisdom. Although there were many different philosophies, they were all essentially dualistic – i.e. they saw a sharp distinction between the physical and mental reality. The physical world and the human body were temporary and evil, while the mind and soul were immortal and good, but trapped in the physical.

So the good news of Jesus that Paul proclaimed was foolish to the Greeks, because salvation came not through reason and the mind, the things they held so high, but through a physical act, which they considered worthless. That physical act was the bodily death and resurrection of a convicted criminal from a despised race in a far-off corner of the empire. And it was that physical act which was supposed to have overturned the spiritual realm. Madness. Pure madness.

And the Jews found Paul's message foolish too. In fact they found it a stumbling-block, "something that trips people up", because they were expecting a victorious Messiah who would bring about a physical rescue from pagan masters and return their people to Godly Jewish rule. Not a Messiah who was seemingly defeated and executed by their pagan masters, and then even if he did come back to life disappeared again soon after.

The wisdom of the Greek world was imparted by eloquent rhetoric, well-crafted words, a showy style that would entertain the reader or listeners, make people stand up and take notice. Of course we have it today through media-savvy spin doctors, politicians highly trained in public speaking,

TV presenters with a gift of the gab and comedians who hold us in the palm of their hand as they speak about the cause they are highlighting. None of it is necessarily wrong, but they persuade us more with their style than their content.

In v17, just before the passage Paul explains it thus: “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power”. Paul wanted the cross to be what it was all about, not beautiful rhetoric, or magnetic personalities giving subliminal messages. The cross does its own work. Telling the story of Christ has its own power – some will see it as weak and foolish, but he knows that in fact it is strong and wise. God knows what he is doing. He likes to use things that many perceive as ‘foolish’, because then following Jesus is not about being cool, but about genuine conviction. As Paul says in v27-29 God chose the weak and foolish and despised things in the eyes of the world so that no-one can boast in themselves, their abilities, their wisdom, their brilliance, they can only boast in Christ.

Paul had no illusions about the reactions the gospel would elicit. Proclaiming the good news of Christ, to Jew or Greek, invited people to mock and call it foolishness, because it didn't rely on human wisdom, on us being able to sort ourselves out. And it is the same today. It doesn't seem to make sense. Because it is about death bringing life, the last being first, the poor being rich, and true power coming not in physical might or superior human reason, but in the Holy Spirit bringing love, forgiveness, humility and peace. It doesn't conform to our reason.

It wasn't fashionable then, nor is it now, to say that we are all sinners. That we're not fully in control of our actions and our words, that we often mess up our life and other people's. We don't mean to, we try our best, it's not that bad. And this unfashionable message says that we cannot redeem ourselves. Sure we can try, we can find ways to feel better about ourselves. We can volunteer or give money to a charity, we can join self-help groups, we can make some difference to the world around us, but ultimately we still get it wrong, we all fall short of perfection, God's standard. We need a saviour, someone to rescue us from ourselves. We try and be our own saviour, or find a friend or group to do it for us, and we get so far, but ultimately they don't satisfy, something still niggles inside us.

But the good news of Jesus comes from the source of all life, who made us and really knows us – how we tick, why we sin, how we can be made whole again. And as v18 says, while the cross might be foolishness to a world that knows it all and thinks it can find the answer to all the problems of the world in human knowledge and human goodness, to those who are in the ongoing process of being saved, accepting that we can't sort ourselves out, the cross is the power of God. The power of a loving heavenly father, who is the only one who has the power to forgive us, change our hearts and help us understand what life is truly about.

When people come to Christ in repentance, when they give up on themselves being master of their own life, when they trust God to forgive them and lead their lives, things change. Lives change. Situations change.

Like Nicky, a single lady who loved drinking, smoking, partying and bringing men back to her flat. She enjoyed life and was very closed to her sisters, all Christians, who spoke about their faith in Jesus. But when 9/11 happened she started asking questions and was invited to church by a friend. She went to tell Christians how stupid they were in believing in a God who could let 9/11 happen, but she kept going back and became drawn in by the compelling person of Jesus. On Sunday when hearing a sermon about entering by the narrow gate she felt she was at a crossroads and had to choose either to carry on down the broad way, living life as she always had, but which she realised ultimately led to a dark and fearful place or choose the harder, unfamiliar narrow way of Jesus. A few days later she prayed, asking God to forgive her for going her own way for so long, acknowledging that she was scared of this new unknown way. Life hasn't been easy for her since, but she knows that Jesus died for her, loves her and brings light to her in those dark places. And we all have stories of the power of the cross for us.

The phrase "worldly wise" is generally used as a complement. It shows someone knows how the world works, they can take care of themselves, make money and do well. But God's wisdom, epitomised by the cross, is other-worldly wise and often at odds with the 'wisdom' of this world. That is a challenge for us as Christians, especially when we think about sharing our faith. We rightly want to make our faith relevant to non-Christians, so that our language of faith and our lifestyles are not a stumbling block to them even hearing what we have to say. But we must not water down the message of the gospel, that we are all sinners in need of a saviour. A saviour who came in the person of Jesus who was crucified

on our behalf out of his immense love for us, but requires us to respond to this costly, gracious act.

The message of the cross is powerful, but foolish. Our role is to proclaim it in words and actions, whatever people think, because we know its true power, and the cross will do its own work, in its own time through the power of the Holy Spirit transforming lives.

Hymn    **755**    *When I survey the wondrous cross*

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Creed    *(We stand to declare our faith)*

Leader    Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
              source of all being and life,  
              the one for whom we exist?

**All            We believe and trust in him.**

Leader    Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
              who took our human nature,  
              died for us and rose again?

**All            We believe and trust in him.**

Leader    Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
              who gives life to the people of God  
              and makes Christ known in the world?



**All            We believe and trust in him.**

**Leader      This is the faith of the Church**

**All            This is our faith.  
                 We believe and trust in one God,  
                 Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
                 Amen.**

### **Prayers   ~ Kay Dodds, St Mark's**

Heavenly Father, whether in our buildings or on-line, we come together to offer our prayers to you, knowing that you will hear us and help us.

**Lord hear us    Lord hear us and help us**

We continue to pray for the ongoing situation we face in relation to the Corona virus, with all its difficulties and complications. We hold before you the burden carried by our government. We pray for their well-being as they are concerned with the well-being of others. We pray for the scientists and medical profession as they balance the demands of Covid - 19 with the needs of the health service. May we show forbearance and understanding as we face an uncertain future.

**Lord hear us    Lord hear us and help us**

As a result of the pandemic, many have had their lives changed in significant ways.

We hold before you those who have been unwell and seem unable to regain their strength, those whose jobs hang in the balance or have come to an end, those for whom isolation and loneliness have caused feelings of uncertainty and depression. For those who are living in fear of the future, we pray that they will be able to acknowledge their fears and find help through the understanding and kindness of others. We pray that new opportunities will enable people to find employment.

**Lord hear us    Lord hear us and help us**

We cast our sights further afield and bring before you the needs of the world. There are many challenges to be met, the needs of the environment, the plight of refugees, and those for whom war, strife and persecution have not ceased because our preoccupations have been elsewhere. Help us to continue to work and pray for a world of peace, justice, and hope.

**Lord hear us    Lord hear us and help us**

We bring before you those who are in need of your peace and comfort at this time: the families and friends of those who have died, Alexander Howie, Tricia Wright and John Taylor, and those who are unwell, Eileen

and Peter Bliss, John Hunter, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park and Joy Storkey, and those known only to us.

Lord hear us    **Lord hear us and help us**

And finally, we pray for ourselves, that in our walk with Christ, we may have the confidence that like Paul, You, Lord, will use our weakness to show Your divine power and that we, too 'have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.' (2 Cor 4:7). **AMEN**

### The Lord's prayer

Leader     Gathering our prayers and praises into one,  
As our Saviour has taught us so we pray.

**All           Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

### Notices

#### Hymn     936 *Teach me to dance*

*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart  
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit  
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence  
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart  
Teach me to love with your heart of  
compassion  
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise  
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming  
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*

You wrote the rhythm of life  
Created heaven and earth  
In You is joy without measure  
So, like a child in your sight  
I dance to see your delight  
For I was made for your pleasure  
Pleasure

Let all my movements express  
A heart that loves to say 'yes'  
A will that leaps to obey you  
Let all my energy blaze  
To see the joy in your face  
Let my whole being praise you  
Praise you

## Blessing

Leader    The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,  
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service, the  
joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

All        **Amen.**

## The Grace

All        **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
And the love of God,  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
Be with us all evermore. Amen.**

**Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing**

