



# The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 23rd October 2022  
The Last Sunday after Trinity  
Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

## Forthcoming Services

### **St Mary's, Bocking**

Sunday 23rd October

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 26th October

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 30th October

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass  
4pm Memorial Service

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 23rd October

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 25th October

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 30th October

11am Holy Communion

## Hymns

479

424

And can it be

517

## Gospel Acclamation

*Open our hearts O Lord,  
to accept the words of the Saviour*

## NOTICES

**Clock change** - Don't forget that overnight on Saturday Oct 29th the clocks 'fall' backwards and you will have an extra hour in bed, or an extra to be ready for church.

**Road Closure** - Please be aware that there are planned works on Church Lane, by the new Polly's Field complex for Sunday October 23rd and Sunday October 30th. A short diversion, via Bailey Bridge Road, Glebe Avenue, Churchill Road, and then Deanery Gardens will likely be necessary.

**Thank you** - Jackie Moorey who ran the recent MacMillan Coffee Morning in Panfield would like to say a huge thank you to all that came along, nearly £500 was raised for this very worthy charity.

**Bible Study group** - We are looking to re-start Bible Study sessions and would love to hear from you if you would be interested in joining. To help us plan these please speak to Fr Rod about days/times that work for you, and also where it might be best to meet. Thank you.

**Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal** - It would be really helpful if all knitting, stationery, toiletries (no creams/liquids) was in by the end of October, thank you.

**Going Green!** - Over the next few months you will be hearing more about our drive to become an Eco-Church. In partnership with A Rocha, an environmental charity, we are hoping to work towards the various awards beginning with bronze. There will be opportunities for all to get involved as we progress, including our younger ones as Eco-Church will be theme for the next Junior Church, Sunday Nov 20th.

**Christmas Tree Festival** - The Festival weekend will be Dec 10th/11th with performances, raffle, tombola, pound presents, refreshments and lots of in-house stall on SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER, Father Christmas may even put an appearance in for that. There are lots of ways for you to support this fundraising event, details to follow on the items needed for the hampers plus much more,

**Bishop of Chelmsford** - Bishop Guli will be preaching at St Mary's Bocking on Sunday 6th November. It would be wonderful to see as many of you as possible, so that we can fully welcome her to the Benefice. Please do mark it in your diaries and join us for what will be a special occasion.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Betty Bloomfield, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger Hurford, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, Bernard, and Margaret Everitt. We also remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind for this week, we pray for the families of Mabel Long, Albert Tagg, Ronald Brooks, Joseph Murray, Leopold Hacault (Priest), Benjamin Farthing, and Bob Pickford.

### The Collect for the Last Sunday after Trinity

Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### ***Epistle Reading - 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18***

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### ***Gospel Reading - Luke 18:9-14***

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

## Address

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a Gentile. Blessed art Thou ... who hast not made me a slave. Blessed art Thou ... who hast not made me a woman.” So begins an ancient prayer which could easily have been used by the Pharisee in the reading we have just heard. He is not an attractive character, at least not as depicted by St Luke. No doubt he did his best to abide by the many rules and regulations that made up the law. He can hardly be criticised for that, though such behaviour can easily lead to pride in oneself rather than a trust in God. He also reveals a sense of entitlement. God has made him who he is and for that he is thankful. The flip side of this is that he despises those who, perhaps also because of how their lot has been cast, are unable to share this sense of self-satisfaction. Is it not his despising of others that makes him so unattractive?

We know nothing of the tax collector, except that he seeks God’s mercy. Tax collectors are rarely popular, as my time many years ago working as a VAT officer visiting traders to check their books, showed me. They are, however, necessary if society is to function in a fair and just way. But if the taxes collected are used to maintain the government of an occupying foreign power – the Roman Empire in the time of Jesus – they risk being counted among the lowest of the low. We do not know if this particular tax collector tried to do his job as honestly as possible or if he had cheated people for his own ends. St Luke is only interested in his acknowledgement that he is a sinner and that he casts himself on God’s mercy. As a result, he is the one who is vindicated.

It is a familiar story but one I find slightly troubling. Both characters seem almost like caricatures. All we know about them is that one is self-satisfied and the other acknowledges his sinfulness. Of course it is right to recognise that we all get things wrong at times and that we need forgiveness both from those whom we have hurt and from God. But there can also be a danger in a false humility; or in putting too much emphasis on shortcomings. One of the most unattractive characters in the novels of Charles Dickens is surely Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*. He introduces himself by saying, “I am well aware that I am the umblest person going” and tells Copperfield “When I was quite a young boy I got to know what umbleness did, and I took to it. I ate umble pie with an appetite. I stopped at the umble point of my learning”. While claiming to be humble, he is in fact plotting his own progress through life, not caring who gets hurt. Protestations of unworthiness should perhaps not always be taken at face value.

To the extent that the Pharisee tried to follow the tenets of the Jewish law, including generosity to those who had fallen on hard times, it is difficult to be critical of him. His behaviour may have been exemplary, but his self-satisfaction is off-putting. He is proud that he is who he is, even if that is to a large extent an accident of birth. Probably he worked hard to achieve his status, but he is also conscious that he is one of God’s favoured ones. He is inherently different from those he despises and there is nothing that he or they can do about that. Although we may imagine that our modern world is very different, in some societies, for example where a caste system is prevalent, there can be a similar rigidity. And is it all that different when people claim that their characteristics or behaviour are determined by their genetic inheritance? I remember a PCC meeting many decades ago where the Rector was urging the acceptance of gay relationships on the grounds that homosexual tendencies were genetically determined. A PCC member asked him if he would feel the same if it could be proved that a tendency to rob people (and I might now add to burn down churches) was similarly determined. I am not of course denying the importance of genetics, but simply suggesting that we often have some freedom to choose how we behave. The Pharisee could have acknowledged that both he and the tax collector, in their different ways, fell short of what they were created to be. He could also have acknowledged that each could at least strive to do the best they could in the situation they each found themselves in.

So does this short parable have any message for us in our very different circumstances? There is the obvious one which is that we need to be aware of our dependence on God. Both characters

recognised this, but in very different ways. For the Pharisee it was a sense of spiritual pride in keeping the law; for the tax collector a recognition of his unworthiness and total reliance on God's mercy. I am not convinced that either of these is very helpful. Few of us like people who are always telling us how good they are and how much they have achieved, except perhaps when their achievements have been against the odds rather than the result of a privileged upbringing. And even accepting that the tax collector's contrition was genuine and not a Uriah Heep like show of false humility, simply acknowledging sinfulness is of little use without some determination to make a change in lifestyle. Of course we need to accept that we are all dependent on God's mercy, and indeed on the ability of others to accept our foibles as well as our better attributes, but consistently emphasising our inadequacy helps no-one.

Surely we should be encouraged to take a realistic view of ourselves. There is a story that a priest once asked a fellow priest if he could recommend a good book on humility. Yes, he said, the best book on humility is the one that I wrote. Initially taken aback by this response, the priest quickly came to realise that true humility does not preclude recognising that you may be very good at some things and that it is fine to say so. Having a proper sense of self and self-worth is surely much more helpful than a false humility or, on the other hand, a claim to expertise in almost everything. Although perhaps not strictly in line with what this particular parable may seem to be teaching – and it is perhaps important to remember that we do not know the specific context in which the story was originally told – there is nothing in wider Christian teaching that would require us to take anything other than a realistic view of ourselves. That can, of course, include a recognition of our failures and hurtful actions and a determination both to heal the past wherever possible and do better in the future. But it should also include an acceptance of our gifts and a determination to use them for the benefit of others.

There has perhaps in the past been too much emphasis on sinfulness in Christian teaching and not enough on original blessing. It would be beneficial to recapture the vision of God seeing what he had made in the beginning and acknowledging that it was 'very good'. I believe that most of us do not need to be constantly reminded of our shortcomings. We are only too painfully aware of them. Rather we need to be affirmed in our gifts and our innate value. Only then can we help others to see that they are also of value in God's eyes. Having a proper confidence that we and others are valued and cherished is both liberating and enabling. It makes it possible to truly experience God's love in action in the world he created and sustains. Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

God of all grace,  
your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry  
with the bread of his life  
and the word of his kingdom:  
renew your people with your heavenly grace,  
and in all our weakness  
sustain us by your true and living bread;  
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.  
Amen.