



Christ Church & St Saviour's Chadderton

Church Family News: 12th – 19th May 2024

Some weeks ago, I watched an episode of “a Yorkshire Farm”. This particular programme showed a young boy (aged 8) being taught how to give commands to his sheepdog who could then herd the flock. He also learned what to do in the lambing season.

It was somewhat different for David who, as the youngest of Jesse’s sons, had the task of looking after the sheep. David knew how to provide for his sheep, as well as protecting them from wild animals. We know how good he was with a sling and stones. David risked his life for his sheep, but he never laid down his life for them – unlike Jesus.



John’s gospel records Jesus saying:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 10.11 (NIV)

Jesus had authority from God to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sin, and also the authority to rise from the dead.

Anyone can lay down his or her life sacrificially for someone else, but only Jesus could lay it down and then take it back again in resurrection.

The sacrifice the good shepherd made is still available for us today.

See **John 3 vs 16-18** – what an offer!

Marlena Smolenski

This week:

Sunday 12 th	9.30am	Morning Worship at St Saviour's
	11am	Morning Worship at Christ Church
	6.30pm	Prayer Gathering at St Saviour's
Sunday 12 th <i>Whit Sunday</i>	9.30am	All-Age Service at St Saviour's
	11am	All-Age Service with Parade at Christ Church
	4pm	Youth Bible Study at Christ Church
	6pm	Prayer Gathering at Christ Church

Weekly Prayer Gatherings

This week at St Saviour's (and on zoom); the details for which are:

Time: Sunday 12th May 2024 6.30-7.30pm

Venue: St Saviour's, Bishopgate Street, off Denton Lane, Chadderton OL9 9BF

Zoom details: Meeting ID: 991 7890 8003 Passcode: 123531

Small Group Bible Studies

Our Bible study groups are a great opportunity to learn, discuss and pray together. We are following a series in Micah, a book that is regularly quoted from at Christmas but rarely read through as a whole and so should be a fascinating time for us all.

Why not come along and give it a try? We have a range of daytime and evening groups available if you fancy joining in; details of venues and times are below (*in Regular weekly events*) and everyone is welcome.

Unable to come in person? Why not join in on a Wednesday or Thursday night by zoom, the meeting ID details are available from the Church Office. All welcome!

Youth Bible Study

Next time, next week – 19th May, 4pm at Christ Church. Anyone aged between 14 and 18 who would like to come along is most welcome. Parents, please contact Ben Wilkinson (see back page for contact details) to register young people or for more information.

PCC Meeting

Our next PCC meeting will take place on Monday 20th May 2024 at 7.30pm at St Saviour's. All PCC members should have received a copy of the agenda, if not please let Cathy know. If there are any items of additional business, please can you inform the Church Office in writing no later than 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Thank you.

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes

May & June's monthly donation request is Toys: For children aged from 2 -14yrs old

Examples: Skipping ropes; cars & trucks; baby dolls; fashion dolls; balls; bat & balls; Yoyos; large animals; farm or zoo sets; play dough with cutters; small Frisbee; large punch balloons; puzzles. Lego or similar; please make sure they are new and will fit in a shoe box, NO BUBBLES. Thank you



Readings: Today: Genesis 22.1-24 Next Week: Acts 2.1-41

Please take time to read ahead

Mission Partner updates

As you are aware we have a number of Mission Partners spread around the world. Part of our responsibility as 'partners' is to hold them in our prayers. To aid us in this our partners regularly send through updates and newsletters about what is currently happening where they are. If you would like to receive a copy of these updates/newsletters either by email or as a printed copy, please can you let Cathy know in the Parish Office. *(Please note that if you wish to receive these by email we will need your consent to use your email address – so a completed data form will be necessary if you haven't completed one before.)*

Safeguarding

We want our churches to be a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is respected and valued. If you see or hear something that doesn't feel right, please don't ignore it. If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk or is being abused, or presents a risk to others, please contact either our vicar or our Safeguarding Officer, Anne Elliott (*contact details on the back page*). If you would prefer to speak to someone outside the church, you can contact the Manchester Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser; Abbey Clephane-Wilson on 0161 828 1451 or email: AbbeyClephane-Wilson@manchester.anglican.org

Regular Mid-Week events:

Monday	10am	Noah's Ark Toddler's Group at St Saviour's
	10am	English Language Class at Christ Church
	1pm	King's Kitchen and Food Store at Christ Church
	1.30pm	Small group Bible study at St Saviour's
Tuesday	10am	Small group Bible study at St Saviour's
Wednesday	6pm	Rainbows at St Saviour's
	6.30pm	Brownies at St Saviour's
	7pm	Guides and Rangers at St Saviour's
	7.20pm	Bible Study at Christ Church
	7.20pm	Bible Study on zoom
	7.30pm	Discipleship Explored on zoom
Thursday	10.30am	Small group Bible study at Norma Howe's
	2pm	Small group Bible study at Margaret Clow's
	7.20pm	Bible Study at Tim & Lindsey Norman's
	7.20pm	Bible Study on zoom

How to give to God's work in your church

To give regularly to your church you can do so:

- By Standing Order to Account name: Christ Church Chadderton
Account number: 22384340 Sort Code: 05 06 46
Please pick up a Standing Order Instruction (back of church) or create one online
- Through Stewardship – Find our giving page online at:
<https://www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20090018>
- By giving weekly through our Planned Giving Envelope Scheme (see Margaret Parrett at Christ Church or Richard McPhail at St Saviour's)
- Weekly offering box

And, of course, if you are a UK taxpayer please complete a Gift Aid declaration form enabling the church to reclaim 25p of tax for every £1 given. Forms available from the back of church. For more information, please see Eric Mee at Christ Church or Richard McPhail at St Saviour's.

Christ Church and St Saviour's:

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Safeguarding Officer:

Christ Church: Anne Elliott **Telephone:** 07952 117050
St Saviour's: Sue Smithies **Telephone:** 0161 653 0618
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Sermon Sheet

12th May 2024

Preacher: James Greenfield

Opening prayer

Help us this day, O Lord, to hear your words and know your voice so that we may live our lives for you.

Reading: Genesis 22.1-24

22 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

² Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?'

'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied.

'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'

⁸ Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the

altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

¹² 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.'

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'

¹⁹ Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Nahor's sons

²⁰ Some time later Abraham was told, 'Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), ²² Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel.' ²³ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴ His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maakah.

Sermon

I wonder, if I say the phrase national treasure, what comes to mind? Maybe immediately we're thinking value, and we think of the Crown Jewels. I'm told they're currently estimated as worth £4billion. Or maybe we're thinking iconic, and we think of Stonehenge, or Westminster Abbey. Or maybe we're thinking person, and we think of Sir David Attenborough or Bobby Charlton.

A national treasure is someone or something that as a country we value above all others. It's someone or something that if deleted from history would somehow make us less British, less who we are. Like as if you removed one of the colours from the national flag. Well in our passage this morning, Abraham has his own national treasure.

Abraham's Faithful Obedience

We're now at chapter 22 of Genesis and it's been a long road for Abraham. We first met him and his wife Sarah way back in chapter 12 when he was already an old man at the age of 75. Throughout their marriage, Sarah and Abraham had never been able to have children. And yet, when he was three quarters of a century old, God promised him a son.

But roll on 10 years, and they're still waiting. Eventually the patience runs out and Abraham sleeps with his servant girl Hagar and she gives birth to the son Ishmael. Finally, he has a son! But it's not the son God promised. And so, the waiting continues. Nothing happens for another 15 years. Abraham is now 99 years old, very nearly a century. And God appears to him again. God promises him, within the year Sarah will have given birth to a son and his name will be Isaac. Abraham and Sarah, they laugh, and yet come round to last week and chapter 21, God's promise comes true. Abraham at the age of 100, Sarah only the sprightly 90, and a newborn son Isaac.

How long Abraham has been yearning for this day. A quarter of a century of God's promise, a lifetime of his marriage with Sarah, waiting for this day. And as he stands there cradling his newborn son, all of a sudden, he couldn't imagine his life without him. This is his national treasure.

What a day this is for Abraham, and yet this is only the beginning. As the weeks, and then the months, and then the years go by, Abraham's joy is seeing Isaac grow, learn and explore. Each milestone and achievement of Isaac's makes Abraham so proud he feels like he could burst. Eventually, another decade or so has passed by and Isaac is now in his teens. This is where it gets really exciting for Abraham. Now is the time for him to pass on his years of wisdom to Isaac, now is the time to teach him how to be a man. Isaac is his greatest treasure. His greatest joy. But he had to wait for him.

Someone who famously had to wait, was Nelson Mandela. As a black man, he grew up in apartheid South Africa where the majority black population were racially segregated from the privileged minority white population. In 1962, he was imprisoned for opposing this. He spent 27 long years behind bars. Over quarter of a century, and around about the same length of time

Abraham had to wait. But at the end of those 27 years, Mandela was freed and the apartheid system in South Africa was overthrown. How did Mandela feel about his freedom and the freedom for his country? Well, it must have been his greatest treasure, his greatest joy. For both Abraham and Mandela, to lose those things would be inconceivable. They would lose something of themselves. They wouldn't be the same again.

And so, look with me at v1,

"Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'"

I tell you, having now had a son of my own, this story takes on a whole new level. Put yourself in Abraham's shoes, how would you respond? As your head starts to spin and a dark horror grips your heart?

See how Abraham responds in v3,

"Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about."

He gets up and goes. Abraham faithfully obeys.

They climb the hill to where God directs them, Isaac carrying the wood and Abraham the fire and the knife. v9,

"When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

Now we have a privilege as the reader that Abraham didn't have. From the beginning, the narrator, who is quite possibly Moses, tells us that God is testing Abraham. He's never going to let Abraham do such a horrific thing. Throughout the bible, God goes to great pains to stress how precious children are to him and how abhorrent killing them and sacrificing them is. The angel was always going to call out in v12,

"Do not lay a hand on the boy".

But Abraham didn't know that. He didn't know the angel was going to call out. In faithful obedience, he is willing to give up his greatest treasure for God. When presented with the choice, who is more important, who do I love more? Isaac or God? He faithfully obeys and chooses God.

And that's a challenge for us here today. What is our greatest treasure? What is our greatest joy? Is there anything in our life that we would not be willing to give up for God? Jesus makes the same point when he speaks to the crowd in the gospel of Luke, "turning to them he said: 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple.'" Now Jesus is not saying here that we need to literally hate our mother or children. No, the whole point is, just like Isaac, our greatest joy might be incredibly good things in this world. But when compared to Jesus, compared to God, we should be willing to give them up, we should be willing to reject them, if that is what is required to follow God.

Now let's be honest, that's a massive thing to be asked to do. What is your greatest treasure? Is it something you own? Is it something you do? Is it someone you love? How would it feel to give them up? Now hear me clearly. It is not God's aim to cause us pain. It is not God's desire to hurt us. We may well the joy of enjoying those things or people for the rest of our lives. Rather, the question is about priorities. When we list all that is important to us in life, who sits at the top? Is it God, or is it someone or something else? When push comes to shove, if you had to choose, what wins out? Is it God, or is it something else?

Now as we've said, we might not have to face such a drastic choice in our life. But we might do. Let me tell you about a lady called Nabila. Nabila grew up in a country in the Middle-East where she had a husband and seven children. Like many people in her country, she grew up as a Muslim. But then she was introduced to Jesus. In Jesus she saw truth, peace, freedom. She loved Jesus and committed her life to following him. At first, she kept her new faith quiet. But then a wave of persecution broke out and Nabila was found out. To remain as a Christian, to keep following Jesus she faced a choice, imprisonment, death, or exile. All three options meant giving up her children. She would never be able to see them again. What is most important to her? Does she choose God? Or does she choose her children? What a choice to have to make! Nabila chose God, and to avoid prison or even death, she fled the country.

God's Faithful Promises

Now there's no getting away from it, Abraham shows incredible obedience. And we must be left thinking, how? How could he be willing to go through with that? As I preach this at St Mary's, I imagine I won't have been able to look in the direction of our Will. If I did, I'm not sure I would be able to

continue. And that would be a real shame. Because there is something wonderful for us to see in this passage. You see, Abraham is able to have such faithful obedience, because he has faith in something. He has faithful obedience in God's faithful promises.

Look back down at the passage and v7,

“Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’ ‘Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied. ‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ [I’ve got news for you here Isaac! But actually...] Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ And the two of them went on together.”

Now what is Abraham doing? Is that a lie to stop Isaac worrying? Well actually no. Last week Ben took us to the book of Hebrews and that same chapter speaks about this event too. The author of Hebrews writes, “By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Abraham knew that even though God had asked him to do such an unthinkable thing, that God must still be faithful to his promises. God had promised that he would have a son and so he knew that God would provide a way out of this. Either that God would provide an alternative lamb to sacrifice. Or that even if he followed through and killed Isaac, God would raise him back from the dead. It was Abraham's confidence in God's faithfulness, that allows him to be so obedient.

Now speaking of confident, something I would love to do but have never had the chance, is bungee jumping. **Has anyone here done it? Hands up if you're the kind of person that would love to do it? And hands up if you're the kind of person that wouldn't touch it with a barge pole?**

Now think about why people do it. Clearly, jumping from a great height is generally considered a really bad idea. But call it bungee jumping and people suddenly queue up and spend quite a lot of money to do it too. Why do they do it? Well, they do it because they have faith in the promises of the bungee rope. They have faith that the rope will be faithful to its promises to not break and to stop them hitting the ground.

In a similar and by far greater way, Abraham is able to be faithfully obedient because he has faith in God's faithful promises. And of course, God does

provide a ram to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. But actually, this whole story points to something much greater.

If I were to ask you what the most famous verse in the bible is, what would you say? Up there has got to be John 3v16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” One of the truths about God, is that he never asks us to do something that he hasn’t already done himself. Although Abraham was willing, he never actually had to sacrifice his son. God was never going to let him. But God the Father did sacrifice God the Son in the person of Jesus. And he did that for us.

Just as Isaac obediently climbed the hill carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, Jesus carried his own wooden cross as he climbed the hill to his execution. And notice where this all happens. Abraham and Isaac are told to climb Mount Moriah. A city would later be built on that hill. In fact, that city is still there today. And its name, is Jerusalem. In the very place where Abraham is stopped from sacrificing his only son Isaac, God the Father does sacrifice his only son, God the Son, Jesus Christ.

And this tells us an immense amount about what Jesus does for us as he died on the cross. You see, all of us without exception should be stood on Mount Moriah. All of us have sinned. All of us in various and different ways, have rejected God as Lord over our lives, and have rejected his ways for our life. And because of that, we are under his judgement. We deserve to face his punishment and just wrath. But as we approach the place of our judgement, God calls out, do not lay a hand on them... Do not do anything to them... I will provide the sacrifice. God steps out in the person of Jesus and takes our place. He substitutes himself for us. And there Jesus hangs on the cross and dies. He dies taking the punishment, the wrath, we all deserve for our sin. The judgement for the sins of the world he takes on himself. And it is because of this, “that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

At the end of Genesis chapter 22, God sees Abraham’s faith demonstrated in his obedience. And God redeclares the covenant promises he’s already made to him. And notice how he ends in v18,

“and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

There’s a mistake we could make with this passage. It would be a mistake to think, that all I need to do is obey more and then God will bless me with his promises. That would be wrong, it would be setting us up for failure. No Abraham faithfully obeys, because he knows God has already faithfully made

those promises to him. But notice how through this, all nations will also be blessed. That all nations is us. And who was Abraham's greatest offspring? Well through his human father Joseph, only Jesus Christ himself. And it was through the obedience of that one God-man Jesus, that the whole world was truly blessed.

In fact, such is the blessing of Jesus to us, that in the gospel of Matthew he can declare, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

Let me lead us in prayer.

Prayers

Take time to pray for:

Our world:

Conflicts around the world; for Israel, Palestine & tensions in the Middle East including Yemen & Iran; Sudan, the Ukrainian crisis & Russia, Afghanistan and Syria and for all areas facing unrest and war. Strengthen and comfort your people in these places. Be with those who are displaced, injured or who mourn. Bring justice and peace. Give wisdom to all leaders on how to respond.

Climate change & stewardship of the world as we see the effects on our planet. For all those struggling especially the vulnerable and poor. For wisdom on how we should change and the courage to act as good stewards in this world.

All our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world and our mission partners Mark & Rebekah in Southeast Asia and Bishop Abelino and Patti in Chile.

Our country: *That God's word will go out to all communities and people.*

For wisdom and knowledge for our leaders both political and in the community.

For King Charles III. Draw close to him and strengthen him especially as he undergoes treatment for cancer.

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and all in government and positions of power. Surround them with wise and godly advisors who will seek God's justice and peace.

The Church of England: For all our Bishops, clergy and lay representatives of General Synod. That the Lord will guide us through the coming days and show us his way forward. Strengthen the resolve of those who are standing firm and let them be wise and effective for God's glory. For unity within God's church.

All affected by the current economic climate and the squeeze on living standards. That those in power will not be driven by greed but seek justice and to be generous and fair. And that organisations trying to help and support those in need will do so with compassion and wisdom.

For our mission partners now based in the UK; Audrey & Derek Newton, and Daniel & Mei Whetham.

Our church and community: *our parish family,*

For outreach and support to our local community and those in need; that we are light in the darkness.

Giving thanks for everyone who is standing up for the Bible's teaching in this area

For our ever-growing English class, that we will find ways to point those who attend to Jesus.

For God to raise up workers for his harvest here.

For wisdom and discernment for our PCC and those considering standing for the PCC.

Ben Wilkinson and his family (Hannah, Esther & David)

James, Helen and William

Our working together with St Mary's

Ourselves: *to grow in understanding of Jesus' love and grace*

To put our trust in our Lord and Saviour

For humility, to be gentle and patient, sacrificial and generous and to bear with each other in love.

You may end each time with:

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Prayer requests:

- Paul & Shiela Linguard as Paul recovers from pneumonia
- Eric & Chris Mee's son-in-law Spencer. Please pray that the brain tumor continues to remain stable and that they would come to understand God's love and grace through this ongoing difficult time
- Karin Whetham
- Val Harley
- Alan and Isabelle Dean
- Derek & Audrey Newton: for the ongoing health problems within the family
- Chris Pearce (Cath's brother) that a suitable long-term home be found for him.
- Dave Wright during his treatment for cancer

The Lord's prayer

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.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

Christ Church and St Saviour's:

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The office will be open on weekdays between 9.30am and 1pm.