

Church Family News: $17^{th} - 24^{th}$ March 2024

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

(Romans 1v16, NIV)

What is the most powerful force in the world? If we look around us we might think it's the latest development in artificial intelligence or robotics, or we might think of the wealth of companies that are richer than entire countries, or destructive power of nuclear weapons.



The true answer, however, is far less obvious to the casual observer. We hold it in our hands on a daily basis. It is the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel message that is unfolded on the pages of the Bible – that is the most powerful force in the world!

Why is it so powerful? Because God has

chosen to use the message of Jesus as the means by which he saves people. To save someone from God's righteous judgment and bring them into eternal life is the most powerful change that can happen to anyone or anything in this universe.

And this is where our role comes in. As well as trusting the gospel ourselves, we have the privilege of holding it out to others. The power is not in us, but in God's word. So may I encourage you to pray for an opportunity this week to invite someone to hear the gospel, whether that's looking at the message of Jesus together over a cup of tea, or inviting them to one of our services and events over the Easter season. May God unleash the power of the gospel through us!

This week:		
Sunday 17 th	9.30am	Morning Worship at St Saviour's
	11am	Morning Worship at Christ Church
	6.30pm	Prayer Gathering at Christ Church
Saturday 23 rd	9am	Women's Breakfast at St Mary's
Sunday 24 th	9.30am	Morning Worship at St Saviour's
Palm Sunday	11am	Morning Worship at Christ Church
	4pm	Youth Bible Study at Christ Church
	6.30pm	Prayer Gathering at St Mary's

Weekly Prayer Gatherings

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

Time: Sunday 10th March 2024 6.30-7.30pm

Venue: St Saviour's, 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 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 week at 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 25th March 7.30pm at Christ Church. If there are any items of business that you wish to bring to this meeting, they will need to be submitted in writing to the Church Office no less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Revision of the Church Electoral Roll

Notice is hereby given that the Church Electoral Roll of the parish will be revised by the Parochial Church Council beginning on Sunday 24th March 2024 and ending Saturday 13th April 2024. Under the Church Representation rules any persons are entitled to have their names entered on to the roll if they baptised, aged 16 or over, and have attended church here regularly for over 6 months (and are not on the roll of any other parish). Forms of application for enrolment can be obtained from the Electoral Roll Officer (Stuart Bailey) and in order to be entitled to attend and participate at the annual church meeting must be completed, signed and return to the Church Office before 13th April 2024.

Readings:

Today: 1 Corinthians 15.1-11 Next Week: Psalm 118 & Mark 11.1-11

Please take time to read ahead

Easter Services

We will be holding the following services during Holy week.

Easter Celebration

28th March Maundy Thursday Service of the Lord's Supper 7pm Christ Church 29th March Good Friday Reflection 9.30am Christ Church 31st March Easter Sunday Service of the Lord's Supper 9.30am St Saviour's 11am Christ Church

11am Christ Church 3pm St Saviour's

Please feel free to invite your family and friends to join you at any of these services. All welcome.

Easter Celebration - family fun afternoon at St Saviour's

Sunday 31st March, 3pm – 5pm at St Saviour's Church.

Family fun, crafts and Easter egg hunt with a gospel message to invite you friends and neighbours to. We are looking for helpers to assist with all aspects of the day; if you are able to help please speak to Lindsey Sykes at St Saviour's or Michelle Dixon or Hannah Wilkinson at Christ Church.

Yorkshire Camps this coming Summer Holiday!

What: Activities such as archery, low ropes, climbing wall, sports, games and crafts. Learning more about Jesus through Bible teaching, small group discussions, quizzes and music

When: from 29 July to 1 August for young people in school years 7 to 10, from 18 to 21 August for young people in school years 3 to 6. A camp for older teenagers is also available.

Where: Yorkshire Camps, Threshfield, Yorkshire (we can organise travel to camp as a group)

Cost: £96. Help with the cost is available, please don't let this stop your young person from coming. Please speak to Ben Wilkinson if you would like help with the cost.

Further information can be found at: <u>yorkshirecamps.org.uk</u>

Booking: Parents need to book for their young people at https://www.yorkshirecamps.org.uk/camps/summer-camps/

Any questions or help to book: please speak to Hannah Wilkinson if your child is in primary school and James Greenfield if your child is in secondary school.

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	
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:

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:

Vicar:Rev Ben WilkinsonCurate:Rev James GreenfieldTelephone:07878 806174Telephone:07547 619436

0161 633 6166

Email: vicar@christchurchchadderton.co.uk Email: james@christchurchchadderton.co.uk

Website: www.christchurchchadderton.co.uk

Parish office: Cathy Flint

Telephone: 0161 624 2326 Email: office@christchurchchadderton.co.uk

Safeguarding Officer:

Christ Church: Anne Elliott Telephone: 07952 117050
St Saviour's: Sue Smithies Telephone: 0161 653 0618
email: safeguarding@christchurchchadderton.co.uk



Sermon Sheet

17th March 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: 1 Corinthians 15.1-11

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Sermon

Introduction

- If God is all powerful, why does he allow suffering?
- How can a loving God send people to hell?

- Where did the devil come from?
- Haven't scientific theories like the big bang and evolution disproved God?
- What about the dinosaurs?
- How did Noah fit all the animals in the ark?
- Why should I believe you when Christians are just as bad as anyone else?

These are just a selection of the questions I found when I googled 'hard questions for Christians to answer'. This weekend we're thinking about sharing the gospel. And when I think about sharing the gospel, a knot suddenly grips my stomach. My thoughts turn straight to questions like these. What if they ask this, or what if they ask that?

How can I possibly convince someone to become a Christian when it's just me? I'm not a super scientist who knows every answer to every question. I'm not a poetic public speaker who can charm everyone I meet. I'm just this odd little Chrisitan. My friends might put up with me but they're certainly not going to be convinced by me. Anyone ever felt like that?

A Gospel We Can Know

Our passage this morning comes from 1 Corinthians. A letter written by the apostle Paul to the church of Corinth. It is famously, or should I say infamously, a church with a fair number of issues. Chapter 15, is the climax of his letter, and contains the most important thing Paul wants them to know.

Look down with me at the beginning of our passage at v1,

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."

Out of everything that the Corinthians need to know, this is the most important. Paul says remember the gospel. And what is this gospel? Well, read on with me. v3,

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures".

What is the most important thing that people need to know? Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day. We might not have all the answers to any and every question that someone might throw at us, but surely, we can remember this? I have the memory of a goldfish and even I can remember that! It is a gospel that we can know.

Christ died for our sins. He died on a cross paying the price for all our sins. His death brings forgiveness for anyone who comes to him in repentance and faith. He really was dead, so much so they buried him. But then he rose from the dead. Jesus is alive! It's a gospel we can know.

As a student I used to live with a house of blokes. One of them had a brain the size of an ocean. He studied classics which essentially meant he was training in knowing a lot of stuff and how to win an argument with it. Time after time he'd ask me these questions about Christianity or God. I tried my best but to be honest with you I just floundered. He always knew more than me, he could always articulate things better than me, he was always one step ahead.

As far as I'm aware he's still not a Christian. But we had another housemate. Now this guy never engaged in any of these debates. As far as I could tell he couldn't care less. But little did I know, he was slowly taking all this in. It certainly wasn't my smart clever answers that won him over. No, it was just those simple Gospel truths. Jesus was real, he died for me, he rose again. I still remember the day I got a call from him, James, I think I believe in God. It's a gospel we can know.

A Gospel We Can Be Confident In

But just because this is a gospel we can know, doesn't mean it's a shallow gospel. No, it's a gospel we can be confident in. It's a gospel we can be confident in.

Did you hear the repeated phrase as I read v3 and v4? Listen out as I read it again,

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins <u>according to the Scriptures</u>, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day <u>according to the Scriptures</u>".

This gospel of ours, it's not some slap-dash back of an envelope gospel that God thought up on the fly. No, it's a gospel he carefully and purposely planned out since the very beginning of the world. It's a gospel that the entire Old Testament points towards. That's what it's referring to by the Scriptures here. It's a gospel we can be confident in.

But if we read on, we find there's another repeated word. Look down with me at v5,

"and that he <u>appeared</u> to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he <u>appeared</u> to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he <u>appeared</u> to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he <u>appeared</u> to me also, as to one abnormally born."

You see our gospel, is a gospel that's rooted in real physical evidence. When Jesus rose from the dead he really, physically appeared to people. To a lot of people! Jesus wants us to have confidence in what he has done for us. When his disciple Thomas doubted, Jesus appeared to him and said see me, touch my wounds. Know that this is real.

Jesus isn't afraid to be put under scrutiny, to be examined and explored. Jesus has nothing to hide and so we shouldn't worry either. We don't need to worry about having all the answers because Jesus can look after himself. Our job is simply to present Jesus as clearly and honestly as we can. Let people see the real Jesus and he will back himself up. It's a gospel we can be confident in.

Lee Strobel is a journalist who worked for the Chicago Tribune. One day his wife became a Christian. Outraged at this, he decided to turn his journalistic eyes on Jesus. If he could prove how ridiculous this all was, then hopefully his wife would forget all about it. However, Jesus isn't afraid to be examined. Instead of disproving Jesus, Jesus ended up disproving Lee. Lee discovered that Jesus is real, his death was real, and most importantly, his resurrection was real. This had such an impact on him that he turned it into the now best-selling book, The Case for Christ. It's a gospel we can be confident in.

A Gospel Even For Us

Now, because this gospel is all about Jesus and not about us, it means it's a gospel even for us. A gospel even for us.

Read with me from v8,

"and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed." See how Paul describes himself, the least. He is the last person you would ever expect to become a Christian. So much so he also describes himself as one abnormally born. He's not your average convert. He used to spend his days pursuing and arresting Christians. He was their arch enemy. But Jesus had other ideas. Jesus appeared to him, even him, and Paul believed his gospel. It's a gospel even for us.

And we know this is true don't we. How did you become a Christan? Was it because you were really good or really holy. Was it because you were really special or really impressive. No. Before I became a Christian, I did all I could to walk in the complete opposite direction. I was a lost stupid sheep in need of rescuing. But it's a gospel even for me. Jesus saved even me.

But that's not all. Because it's also a gospel to be proclaimed by the least of people. Recently in our Sunday prayer meetings, we read this in 2 Corinthians. This is what people said about Paul at the time,

"His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."

Paul was not impressive to listen to. He wasn't even impressive to look at. And yet it's through him that the gospel spread throughout Europe. It's a gospel even for us.

And this is great news for us. Because it means we don't need to Billy Grahams to share the gospel. We don't need to be eloquent, we don't need to have all the answers. We just need to know that Christ died for our sins, was buried and then rose again. And that he came for people even like us. It's a gospel even for us.

You know, the most impressive evangelist I know was just like this. At the time he was a physics student at the University of Manchester. And like many physicists, charismatic public speaking wasn't his happy place shall we say. He wasn't impressive to look at, he wasn't impressive to listen to. But he was by far the best evangelist I knew. Why? Because he put himself out there none the less. I remember him telling me of one time he stood outside the door to his housemate's room for half an hour. Just standing there not moving. He stood there for half an hour summing up the courage to knock on the door and invite him to something at church. He knew he didn't have the strength in his charisma, he didn't have the strength in his charm, he didn't even have the strength in his own courage. But what he did have, was the strength of the gospel. A gospel we can know. A gospel we can have confidence in. After half an hour, he did knock on that door. It's a gospel even for us.

Application - The Chain

I want to finish by coming back to that question, how did you become a Christian? I'm sure in this room there will be all sorts of different stories we could tell. Some of them incredible miracles of God. However, I suspect 9/10 of us fall into this category, we became a Christian through someone we know. It could be that we were taught from a very early age about Jesus by our parents. It could be that a friend or colleague shared with us their faith.

God has no limits, he can and does work in incredible ways. It's such an encouragement for example to hear when people come to faith in Islamic countries through Jesus appearing to them in dreams. However, the normal way God works, is that the gospel is shared through normal people with the normal people they know. In fact, we stand here today as Christians because there is this chain running through history. 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul shared the gospel with people in Greece. They then passed it onto others. They then passed it onto other people they knew. On and on this happened. Generation by generation. Century by century. The gospel spread across Europe even to this grey drizzly island on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. The gospel came even to us.

Our wonderful privilege as Christians is that we get to be the next link in that chain. We could be the next link that passes on the gospel to someone else. When we share the gospel we don't need to re-write it, we don't need to come up with clever strategies. We just pass on what has been already passed to us.

And so, let's think about the people we know. Everyone we know, whether it's family, colleagues, neighbours, God has put into our lives for a reason. God has given us those relationships for a purpose. Now don't panic, it is not our job to convert those people. That's God's job. But we do have this wonderful opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Here's three simple ways we could do this.

Firstly, we can use the normal conversations we have with people. For example, what's the one question most people get asked each week? "What did you get up to at the weekend?" We can be honest, ye we went along to church as normal. It was really interesting this week, we were looking at this passage about idols in the old testament actually. What do you think, do you think we still worship idols today? Now it takes a step of courage to make that step, but do you see how very organically we can move a conversation onto something about the gospel.

Another thought. Let's use the obvious church services to invite people to come with us. One privilege of living in a country with a Christian heritage, is that Christian festivals still have a place in our culture. Actually, it can be a really easy invite to invite someone to a Christmas service or Easter or Harvest or Mothering Sunday or whatever it might be.

Final thought, let's build on the relationships we have with people. I had a friend and we'd been friends for a good while. They knew I was Christian, I'd invited them to a couple of services from time to time and we'd occasionally have chats about God. One day I just asked, look we've been friends a long time, you know I'm a Christian. How do you fancy looking at the bible with me, and I show you want it is I really believe. As my friend they were naturally interested, and we started to meet every other week or so to read through the gospel of Mark. I knew I didn't have all the answers, so I wanted to let Jesus speak for himself. It wasn't anything complicated, we just read a bit and then chatted about what was interesting in it. If they had questions I couldn't answer, I didn't bluff my way through. I said I don't know, but that I'd go find out.

So, the gospel. It's a gospel we can know, a gospel we can be confident in, a gospel even for us. So, let's go share it.

Prayers

Take time to pray for:

Our world:

Conflicts around the world; for Israel, Palestine & tensions in the Middle East including Yemen; 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: 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

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.

Give thanks for:

- That a buyer has been found for Avonleigh Gardens so Eva Dale and the other residents can be secure in their home.
- That God is bringing people into our church family

Prayer requests:

- 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) has moved to Alexandra Care Home in Oldham for long-term care.
- Dave Wright during his treatment for cancer
- Anne Day

For the family and friend of

Joy and Daniel Ernst on the death of Joy's father, Derek

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:

Vicar: Rev Ben Wilkinson Curate: Rev James Greenfield Telephone: 07878 806174 Telephone: 07547 619436

Email: <u>vicar@christchurchchadderton.co.uk</u> Email: <u>james@christchurchchadderton.co.uk</u>

Website: www.christchurchchadderton.co.uk

Parish office: Cathy Flint

Telephone: 0161 624 2326 Email: office@christchurchchadderton.co.uk

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