

Sunday 30 August 2020

Matthew 16:21-28

This goes to congregations at North Hillingdon, Hayes and Hayes End. If you get it by post and have an email, then tell me so next time we can email you and save a stamp.

You can keep in touch via the church websites (www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk, www.hemc.org.uk, www.northhillingdonmethodistchurch.org) and Facebook:

- www.facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch
 - www.facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch
 - www.facebook.com/northhillingdonmethodistchurch
- A video for Sunday will be on each website and Facebook.*

Each church also has a WhatsApp group. If you want to join it then let me know.

On Sunday, there are services at North Hillingdon (at 9.30 am, led by Ken Kingston) and Hayes End (at 11.00 am, led by Sue Lloyd). You are welcome at any service. (There are no services at Hayes yet, as building work is being done.) In addition, the circuit Zoom service is at 10.45 am.

Two steps forward ...

(Matthew 16:21-28)

There's a Maths puzzle about a snail trying to get out of a hole 10m deep. Each day the snail climbs 3m, but she slips back 2m every night. How long does it take her to escape? (The answer is overleaf.)

Peter in the reading from Matthew's Gospel is a bit like the snail, taking a step forward but then slipping back. In the previous few verses (which we looked at last week), Peter has professed that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God. And Jesus has given him the keys of the kingdom of heaven and said that 'on this rock, I will build my church'.

Yet now when Peter hears that his Lord must suffer and die, he says that this must never happen. Jesus responds with harsh words "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block ...". What a contrast!

The rock on which the Church is to be built turns out to be a stumbling block for Jesus.

What's changed? Peter has done nothing wrong. But what he has done is to think the wrong things. His thoughts which were tuned to the divine, are now

domesticated and earthly. He becomes protective of Jesus and cannot begin to comprehend that suffering and death are part of the vocation of the Messiah. He cannot grasp that the life of Jesus must include vulnerability. He can only hope for success.

The last few months have revealed our vulnerability, and to a certain extent we are now living with that. We may want to deny it or ignore it, but we can't. The world has changed. We cannot go back to how it was. We need to build a new normal.

And if you are anything like me, that is a hard thing to grasp. It takes time, and it can take effort. We need to learn who to do the same things differently. And to make it even harder, the difference seems to keep changing.

In the coming week, teachers and children will all return to school. But it will be a different experience – sanitising of hands, one-way systems, whether masks are worn or not. Classroom bubbles that need to stay and learn together. (And that's what I can think of, from the top of my head.) We have got used to queuing for shops, and the wearing of masks. And there is the social distancing of one metre plus, which can entail sidestepping and skirting around others.

Church services are different too – shorter services, no singing for the time being, less chance to chat etc.

We are acknowledging our vulnerability and living with it, and making the changes we have to. For the good of ourselves and others.

Look back from where we have come – the lockdown of March, April and May. We have moved forward. Although it can feel it comes in fits and starts, especially according to the latest guidance given

But what we can't do is ignore it. We become a stumbling block to ourselves and others.

There will be times when we succeed, but there will also be days when we struggle and stumble. And in that sense, we are a bit like Peter.

But look how Jesus treats Peter. It reveals something of the nature of God – how God reaches out to us.

Yes, Peter is rebuked and called a stumbling-block. But in all of that, Jesus does take back the keys of the kingdom or retract his promise that this will be the rock on which the church is built.

We are loved by God, we are blessed by God. And that love can never be quenched, the blessing can never be cancelled.

We may move two steps forward, then make mistakes and move one step back. But in all and through all, God walks with us, and we walk, work and live in God's power, God's love and God's blessing.

(Answer: 8 days. At the beginning of day 8, the snail is 7m up. She then climbs 3m during the day, which means she reaches the top and can escape.)

Prayer for the Week

Lord, grant me patience to endure,
faith to trust in you,
joy to see you at work,
and hope to believe that all will be well.
In the name of Jesus. Amen.

[Please pray for students, teachers and school staff as a new school year begins. And for parents too.]

Making New Connections

For many years there has been a church magazine at Hayes End, fantastically edited by Enid. She has chosen to lay her pen and keyboard down, and we thank God and her for her ministry.

In its place will be *Connections*, appearing four times a year, beginning in the autumn. It will be a way of increasing links between the churches of Hayes End, Hayes and North Hillingdon. And it will make connections between readers, the community, wider Methodism and God. The aim is to inspire our faith and discipleship, and be a way of sharing God's good news.

If you'd like to be involved in the magazine or have an idea of a story to share, then tell Ken (details below) or Prima (hahemcoffice@btinternet.com).

Bible passages for Sunday 6 September

Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 13:8-14

Sunday on the BBC

8.10 am **Sunday Worship** Radio 4 (93.5FM)
'Wild at Home' – Paul Kerensa leads prayers and preaching from 2020's online Greenbelt Festival.

12.25 pm **Songs of Praise** BBC1

(Note the change to the usual time)

Aled Jones visits Blenheim Palace, its estate and its private chapel. And Laura Wright joins Oxford's Soundabout Inclusive Choir for a virtual hymn singalong and to hear how being part of the choir helps those with learning disabilities.

Sunday Worship

There will be services at North Hillingdon (9.30 am) and Hayes End (11.00 am). If you feel confident and happy to come, then it would be lovely to see you.

However, services will be different. Before and leaving church, you will need to use hand sanitiser. You'll need to wear a mask too. And we'll need to record (with contact details) who attends.

Services will be shorter and there'll be hymns/music played but no singing. And once the service is over we'll need to leave church. We can't serve tea and coffee yet, and to chat we'll have to do this outside.

Please do not attend church if you need to be isolated, if you are unwell or have Covid-19 symptoms.

There is also the circuit Zoom service at **10.45 am**. This week it is led by the Revd Ruth Gee.

If you have the internet then use this link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82456109501?pwd=dVpTTkFkaINEVi9ieW9oc09wb3Qzdz09>. The meeting ID is 824 5610 9501, and the password is 681517.

If you don't have the internet, follow these steps and you should be able to join in from your phone.

1. Dial 020 3481 5237 or 020 3051 2874.
2. Enter meeting ID (824 5610 9501) then # key
3. You will be asked to enter your participants ID. Ignore this, and just press # key
4. Enter the password (681517) then the # key.

Take care, stay safe and God bless,

Rev Ken

(020 8756 0567) (ken.kingston@methodist.org.uk)