**Morning Praise @ Home 24th November 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** 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. **Amen**

### Bible Reading James 5:7 – 11, 13 – 16

### Reflection from Philip *‘Be Patient!’*

In our reading from James 5 this morning, we were told to slow down - and be patient.

We were told not to rush things, let God do his work in your life and your situation.

In the meantime, we are told to be faithful and patient, while waiting for God.

We were given two examples of this patience:

* Farmers, who wait for the rains to allow their harvest to ripen (perhaps in this country it’s more about waiting for the sun…)
* The prophets, who ‘endure under suffering’ – Job is given as an example.

I remember as a small boy (and also when I was a lot older) my late mother saying to me again and again, ‘be patient, Philip!’. She knew that I was not born with the gift of patience.

In my defence, I do like to think of myself as a bit of a ‘doer’. If I can sort something out, I will have a go, I will try to control events, where I can. It’s just the way I am.

So I will often argue that it’s important that we sort things out, we need to do something… I guess I can easily get impatient with those who seem very patient!

This passage from James addresses the question of when we should be patient.

1. When circumstances are uncontrollable
2. When people are unchangeable
3. When problems are unexplainable

Do you recognise any of these situations at the moment?

God says to us, be patient. Be faithful to do what God wants you to do. Keep on while you are waiting, grow as you are waiting.

**When circumstances are uncontrollable**

This is where the example of the farmers comes in. In verse 7 we are told to think of the farmers who patiently wait for the rain to make their crops grow.

Farmers are busy people, but a lot of that is about a long list of things to get on with as they wait for the crops to grow. They wait for the right time to prepare the soil, to plant the crops, to harvest them.

Farmers can’t control the weather, or crop prices on international markets – or what the government decides to do next as regards grants – or taxes. They could easily feel out of control, at the mercy of external factors.

It’s true for all of us, farmers or otherwise. When you have a health issue, while you might be able to do something about it (exercise, diet, take medicines, do physio, a lot of recovery is about waiting).

Now I can speak from some personal recent experience on this one. I’m 5 weeks post major knee surgery – an operation quite a few of those here have been through. At times, especially at night, it’s really uncomfortable; there is a lot of pain. That’s when this issue of patience is put into perspective.

Last weekend the family went to the cinema to see Gladiator 2 – you know, the sequel to the Russell Crowe classic Gladiator:

*‘My name is Maximus Decimus Meridius, Commander of the armies of the North, general of the Felix legions and loyal servant to the true emperor. Father to a murdered son, husband to a murdered wife. And I will have my vengeance, in this life, or the next…*’. My advice – don’t bother, like so many sequels to great films, it was rubbish!

Anyhow, while Caroline and my stepson Iolo queued for some popcorn and drinks, I sat with Eirlys, who is 15 and wheelchair-bound since birth due to cerebral palsy. She asked if my leg was hurting. I said it was, a bit. She replied she was sorry, and that she knows what that is like. Being in a wheelchair all the time can cause your legs to stiffen, so every evening she has to put special braces on her legs to help straighten them out. They look like torture devices. They are torture devices.

I asked Eirlys if she felt much pain, and she answered, ‘Of course, yes, every day – I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy’. I nearly choked up. She just grins and bears it. No fuss.

Don’t get me wrong, she’s no saint – she can be quite the madam, the moody teenager. But she never complains about her condition. She just gets on with it, endures it. Writing a published novel when she was 10, doing lots of painting, being an active member of Mold youth theatre, and studying hard to get her exams to hopefully get a place in Uni to study immunology.

She often uses humour, quite dark humour, humour that would result in many a comedian being ‘cancelled’! Her brother Iolo, aged 16, has the same condition and is also in a wheelchair. He handles it with dark humour too. When asked at college what career he fancied, he replied, quick as a flash, ‘Stand-up comedian’.

Before a recent operation requiring a general anaesthetic, just before he went under, he said to the medical team ‘Look, someone’s written GULLIBLE’ on the ceiling!’ They all looked up, including the surgeon. As he fell asleep they were left laughing as they all looked up at the pristine, unmarked theatre ceiling… He is a bit of a legend at Glan Clwyd hospital now!

So they both help me keep any temporary discomfort and pain from my recent knee operation in perspective. Sometimes, we need to be patient and endure – and deal with things we can’t control the best we can, while we still ‘keep on keeping on’.

**When people are unchangeable**

If you stick to your beliefs and try to follow a Christ-like life, it’s inevitable that you will come across people who oppose you and what you stand for. In James 5: 10 we are told to ‘look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord’.

The prophets such as Elijah and Moses spoke truth to authority. They were often rejected by the people and by those in power. Some prophets were mistreated for years before they saw any change, if any.

The prophets kept praying for those they were told by God to speak to. They kept them in their hearts, despite the rejection and hostility. So for us, another lesson. Remember the prophets, speak God’s truth and be faithful, even when we are suffering for God, for what is right, and people are not changing.

**When problems just can’t be understood**

We read ‘We give great honour to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance.’

Job – the story starts with a conversation between God and the Devil. Job knows nothing about this conversation. The Devil says Job is faithful to God only because he is successful and happy. God allows Job to tear Job’s life apart – he loses his family, his wealth, his health.

He ends up sitting on a dunghill, in misery and agony from the boils that covered his body. But he wouldn’t curse God.

He had no idea why all this was happening. Nowhere does God explain to Job why he is having to suffer. James did not say Job was ‘patient’. But that he had steadfastness, endurance, perseverance. He wasn’t patient – read Job, and you will see how Job was impatient with his God!

A lot of things happen in our lives that we just can’t explain. But sometimes all we can do is trust in God and wait, endure.

So when are we to be patient?

* When circumstances are uncontrollable
* When people are unchangeable
* When problems just can’t be understood.

Maybe you can see some of these things in your life at the moment. God tells us to be patient, to be faithful to what God wants us to be doing, to keep on working, and to grow in faith while we are waiting.

If it all sounds a bit grim, then remember **Isaiah 40:31**

***They who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall rise up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.’***

Now there’s something to cling to, as I gingerly take my steps towards a full recovery…. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

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

**We believe and trust in him.**

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

**We believe and trust in him.**

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?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

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

**Prayers of intercession**

We pray for kings and queens, prime ministers and presidents and all earthly rulers: the loyal and compassionate, the trustworthy and honest, the wise and the considerate. Give them the strength to continue in wisdom.

We pray also for leaders who fall short of these high ideals, for those who forget who they are meant to be protecting and supporting, give them ears to hear the voices of those they have power over and hearts to listen in compassion.

We pray for those who make big decisions, doctors and teachers, nurses and aid workers, parents and police. Help them to listen to the needs of others.

We pray for all those who have to live with the decisions of others: the powerless, the landless and the disempowered.

We pray for our families for all the love we find there, and for grace and forgiveness when things are hard.

We pray for all who suffer today in hospitals and hospices or at home: in times of suffering, be our close companion, heal our wounds and our sickness, and give us comfort and strength. We remember those who are ill and give thanks for the lives of those who have recently died. We pray for all who mourn, and all who tend and care.

We pray for ourselves, you know when we fall short of being the best we can be, you know when we find it hard to maintain our boundaries, and when we fail in our compassion. You know the things that keep us awake at night and the things we look forward to.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**