

St James' Church, Weybridge

Trinity 3 (Proper 7) Yr A – Sunday 21st June 2026

Introduction and Call to Worship

True to his promise, Jesus the Prince of Peace is among us now – so let us welcome him and worship in a spirit of true celebration.

Today's Readings

First Reading Romans 6:1b-11

Death no longer has dominion over whoever has died to sin, for they are alive to God in Christ.

Gospel Matthew 10:24-39

Having gathered his disciples, Jesus imparts his wisdom to them before sending them out to spread the good news. The underlying message is one of hope – not to be afraid but to have faith, despite the difficult times that lie ahead.

HOMILY *“consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*
(Romans 6: 11)

It is very good news that the war between the USA and Iran may be ending, with the signing of a so-called deal. Mr Trump likes deals and we sincerely hope and pray this one will hold. Although, it doesn't look like things have really moved forward, and the destruction in Iran and other locations around the Middle east is lamentable. Of course, some politicians have been presenting the deal as very good news.

Do you long to hear some good news? Have a think about a time when you heard something truly wonderful – the birth of a child, a new job, exam results. Our young people who have just finished their exams will be praying for good news come results day in August.

Today's passage from Matthew forms part of what is known as the “lesser commission”, in which Jesus gathers his disciples and imparts his wisdom, and then he sends them out with a Kingdom message, Good News!

Then the Gospel becomes somewhat more challenging. In verse 34 we hear Jesus teaching the crowd, *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”* How can that be good news? A sword?

I thought the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the coming of the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) The angels sang, when our Lord was born, Peace on earth! (Luke 2:14) Jesus would never advocate or condone violence, surely? In Luke 6:29, our Lord suggests peace instead of retaliation saying, *“If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also”*? And from the Sermon on the Mount, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”* (Matthew 5:9). Even from the Ten Commandments, *“Thou shall not kill.”* (Exodus 20: 13)

One of the problems with humanity is our desire to fight – to win, conquer, impose our ideas upon others and to control. We are a thoroughly disagreeable mammal! War is in many ways the ultimate example of human frailty – the sin which clings so close. We like to think we would never want war and we hopefully all strive to avoid it, but not at any cost. Our first reading reminds us that to deal with sin we must die to self and live for God's way, "*consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*" (Romans 6: 11) So what did Jesus mean in Matthew 10:34, "*I have not come to bring peace, but a sword*"?

Our Lord lived in a violent period of history when the Romans would strike with a sword and ask questions later, and injustice was the norm. In our hearts, we would love all human beings to always strive for peace, of course. Perhaps we thought or still hope the United Nations could achieve just that, and in some ways over the past 80 years it has done well at often keeping the peace. But ultimately peace requires us, as humanity to see God's presence in each other, whatever our differences, and some in the world today seem as incapable of that. Some even desire to take away hard won human rights, arguing they are not needed. This raises questions of justice.

Jesus words sound violent and they are challenging for us, not least in today's climate of conflicts around the world. I suspect that we often equate peace with the absence of anything – a void, a state of passivity, or inertia. But actually, real peace is life lived in the fullest sense with justice – being set free from all that holds us back, and that includes sin and selfishness. The world order does contain many perceived and I would suggest, actual levels of injustice today. One example is climate change. If we are to take the Anglican Marks of Mission seriously, we should be supporting nations, often the poorest, who bare the unfolding disaster – however they are caused. We are also called to tackle unjust structures which continue to perpetrate discrimination.

And with that desire to challenge injustice, we tend to think of peace as synonymous with agreement – even a state of harmony. But in fact, as the Living in Love and Faith process demonstrated, finding agreement between different people who hold very strong convictions can be very difficult. Learning to disagree well, and recognising human rights and dignity – seeing God's presence in the other is the first place to start. The great people of justice and peace throughout history have been those willing to speak truth to power. They have been willing to cause division and controversy, for the better good, to die to sin. Think of Gandhi, Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King as just three of many examples, and of course Jesus, our Lord who was the Prince of Peace, who thoroughly annoyed the religious and conservative leaders of his day, always speaking the truth, his very words cutting like a sword.

The Good News from today's readings is that we can find peace, if we consider ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The Lord of life and love speaks like a sharp sword! His words rightly invigorate, challenge and inspire us. Consequently, we are called to live lives overflowing with justice, that we may be alive to God, in Jesus Christ who is our lasting and eternal peace. Amen.