

St James' Church, Weybridge

Sunday 28th June 2026 - Proper 8 Yr A

Introduction and Call to Worship

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us of our need to receive the people whom God sends to us. If we are open to what they bring to us, we will be blessed. We open our hearts to God and seek to be receptive as we worship and then we are sent to serve as disciples of the Lord.

Today's Readings

First Reading Jeremiah 28:5-9

Jeremiah is face to face with his opponent, Hananiah, who, in the previous verses, has flatly contradicted Jeremiah's message. Hananiah is reminded that the test of a true prophet is found when his or her words turn out to be true.

Gospel Matthew 10:40-end

If we are sensitive to God's servants, realising who they are and welcoming their message and the quality of life within them, we will not miss out on our reward.

HOMILY

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." (Matthew 10:40)

Do you remember the ITV show 'The Krypton Factor'? It ran for nearly 20 years from 1977 and included a range of challenges which the contestants had to complete, using different human faculties, including mental ability, strength and fitness as they were set challenges such as sticking together shapes by following instructions while blindfolded and remembering differences between pre-recorded stories. At the end of each episode the poor souls would face an army assault course. Truth be told, taking part in 'The Krypton Factor' would be my worst nightmare! Just the thought of having to run an assault course fills me with horror! For some everyday life can feel like running an assault course with all sorts of hurdles to overcome. Does this sound familiar to you? This past week with exceptional heat has felt a bit like that too, for lots of reasons.

At the end of any race, those taking part need something cooling to drink; a reference to the cup of cold water in today's Gospel reading reminds us that even an apparently small action can be a demonstration of great respect and love. The reading reassures us that God notices and rewards even such simple acts of kindness. Yet the world around us seems so very troubled, with conflicts, climate change and dreadful natural disasters like the earthquake this week in Venezuela. There they face race against time to find those buried beneath the rubble and our hearts go out to them, our prayers are with them in their race against time.

Generally, people don't seem to be happy, perhaps because there seem to be so many demands upon all of us, with expectations set high, and some I suspect self-inflicted. Life for some must feel like they are being forced to jump through hoop after hoop – with rules set up by others – running a course that is beyond their ability. And all sorts of life's challenges can leave us feeling like we are running a race. Do you feel that sometimes too?

I remember a quote by the late great Sir Peter Ustinov who joking said of himself and a school report, *"Peter set's himself exceptionally low standards which unfortunately he fails to achieve!"* For many of us it can feel like the opposite – we are expected to do so much and reach such a high

standard, even beyond our ability. But friends, with Jesus, we are called to be the very best people God has made us to be.

We see this mirrored for us in the life of Jesus, God's only begotten Son, who is a descendent of the great King David. Jesus is the one promised in the Old Testaments Scriptures – foretold by the great prophets such as Jeremiah. Of course, the Hebrew people didn't always listen to the prophets, even though they signposted the way to God, emphasised God's standards and looked to the fulfilment of God's Law. Many today are the same. But we are responsible for the way in which we interact with the people God sends to us – both the historical prophets of old and those we encounter in person day in and out, and their expectations. God's Word as spoken by the prophets of old is fulfilled in Jesus yet he also faces the challenging expectations of others whose standards are not simply too high but quite wrong. Those incorrect ideals led to Jesus being rejected, crucified and once dead hidden away in a tomb as if rock could contain the brilliance of God's new creation. Never!

And we know the story doesn't end there, as the shame of the cross is turned into the salvation of the world. Just as God intervened to bring about the biggest change possible – the incarnation – God among us in human form, so God acts again and brings about a change in the lifeless body of Jesus, bringing our Lord back to life after 3 days. Jesus overcomes death and hell, and he brings about a lasting relationship of love that will never cease, as God calls each one of us to active service. God's standards are high, but they are rooted in love and call on us to be active in the world.

We are not passive bystanders looking back in time at history, for we are disciples, called to be active today with a message to proclaim to a society that so desperately needs relief from the stresses and strains of modern life. We are called to live by God's love and live it abundantly, as if we are running a race too. We, people of God in Weybridge, are called to action, which is at the heart of our Church Development Plan, as disciples in the world with a Gospel to proclaim.

A year ago tomorrow, the feast of Peter and Paul Apostles, our very own Fr Tom was raised by God, through the power of the Holy Spirit to the sacred order of Priesthood. Called deeper into a relationship of loving service, among us for a time. But it is not just his responsibility to serve, it is all of ours, and we need equipping and feeding for that task. One of Tom's gifts has been to help us establish small groups, to monthly meet for prayer, reflection, bible study and mutual support. To help us run the race set before each of us. Our small groups do feed us spiritually, as does our worship week by week for ministry is not just the task of our clergy, but lay and ordained are called to be disciples today, life-long learners in the school of Christ. We are tasked with bringing Christ Jesus to this community in Weybridge. Because people need to know that whatever hoops the world causes them to have to jump through, God still loves them, and will be faithful to them, if they are faithful in return. And our welcome, even a small cup of water, is the gift of Christ himself in love.

St James' Church, The Church of England in Weybridge, and all Christians in this place have an enormous job to do. It is only by serving this community, by being an example of faith in the midst of people's busy lives, and sharing God's faithfulness for them, that we can demonstrate the real love which being a Christians offers – and enjoy the reward, won for us by Jesus our Saviour. It is this love which helps restore order to peoples lives, and helps all formulate priorities with a heavenly goal. So, be faithful courageous disciples, run the race with joy and live in love. Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, June 2026.