

St James' Church, Weybridge

Proper 9 Yr A – Sunday 5th July 2026

Today's Readings

First Reading Zechariah 9:9-12

In words that Matthew quotes when recording Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, God's people are promised a rescuer who will be a king and yet humble. We need only return to him, our stronghold and our hope.

Gospel Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus urges all to recognise him as the Father's Son, even if he does not match their preferred picture of God. His actions will prove who he is, and those who come to him will find both comfort and challenge.

HOMILY *'Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.'*
(Matthew 11:28)

This passage from Matthew's Gospel may seem very familiar to you. Traditionally, these words are used by the priest during Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer. *"Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."* (Matthew 11:28) The 'Comfortable' words as they are known offer inspiration, but what was Jesus really saying? What does he mean by, using the modern translation, 'come to me?' and 'I will give you rest?'

Jesus uses the image of children singing sad and happy songs in their games, something those of us with children or grandchildren will be familiar. Mine burst into song at every opportunity, but most of all when they are excited. One journey to Coral Reef at Bracknell was particularly memorable, as the traffic on the M25 ground to a halt, and the following thirty minutes of delay saw the happy songs transform into a near biblical lament! They were worried, as I was, that we may just miss our timeslot at the waterpark. As it happened, we arrived just in time – God is good, as I just don't know how they would have coped had we missed it!

The illustration of songs in today's Gospel is really about the way we try to make God *dance to our tune* rather than following God's way. Jesus compares them to 'this generation' – *"But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.""* (Matthew 11: 16, 17) These are not comfortable words! The point here is simple and straightforward. Our relationship with God is not actually comfortable in the sense that it is not usually the way 'WE' want things to be.

Take the example of a 3 legged race – you know the kind of thing we loved (or loathed!) at Sports Day as children – our leg bound to another child's! I have the pain of sports day at St James' on Friday when I will no doubt be compelled to compete – this time the egg and spoon race!

Being tethered to someone else teaches us about support, and reminds us just how we need to help each other, if something is to be achieved, a race won. It is no good, being tied to someone and trying to walk in the opposite direction! When God chose to come among us in human flesh – the Incarnation

– God chose to walk with us. Jesus knew and understood that people can't get through life without help. He knew that every person needs more in their life than just their own desires and aspirations. He knew that every person needs God and he is the way to the Father. You see that is the truth that will set us free – that each one of us needs to rely upon Jesus who leads us to the Father. We need to listen to his Word from the bible and take it to heart. We need to listen to his teaching and rely upon him for guidance. We need to come to him in our prayers, pray in his name and share with him all our thoughts, hopes and fears. And we need each other as we journey life's road, run that race. And God knows us, every bit of us, our happy and sad songs too.

It is Jesus who calls us – to be his disciples today and as lovely as those words from scripture are, repeated in the old Communion Service, there is nothing comfortable about the call to discipleship. We need to trust Jesus if we are to run the race that is set before us. How comfortable are we with our own picture of God? Too comfortable, perhaps? In today's Gospel Jesus gives us all an invitation: "*Come to me.*" Come to me – whether you prefer traditional hymns or perhaps choruses. Come to Jesus and see the variety of God – in a Jesus who attended synagogue and Temple and mixed with outcasts, a Jesus who celebrated at a wedding feast and wept for his friend Lazarus! Come to me says Jesus, who prayed quietly alone and yet taught the multitude, a gentle Jesus who healed the sick and an angry Jesus who railed at injustice and hypocrisy, overturning the tables in the temple!

Rather than make God (or our fellow Christians!) dance to our tune, can we not allow God's own music to emerge? We need Jesus to help us run the race – to call us, lead us, teach us, admonish us! We can't run without him. As we work to prepare our next Church Development Plan, we will be looking for ways to reach out, to plant out and to grow relationships, recognising that it is God who give growth, who rewards faithfulness and who blesses. We will ask of our community, can we not risk something different, if it helps others to come to find God at the centre of their lives too? Is it time to accept the challenge Jesus has given us – and step outside our comfort zone as his disciples?

Our Gradual Hymn can help us with our prayer here.

Take, O take me as I am. Summon out what I shall be. Set a seal upon my heart and live in me.

You are running a race which lasts a lifetime – hopefully not a 3-legged race and remember that nobody is too young or too old, to be a disciple of Jesus – it is our call to serve. And you can't run that race alone, whatever you are singing along the way. You need Jesus to lead you and to protect you. Therefore, you need the wider church family here at St James' to support, encourage and yes to challenge you! The church is his very body on earth today – so you need your time of prayer, worship and fellowship here as much as anything else – if not more so. Make church a priority – make discipleship your path and listen to the Lord who speaks to you today through his holy Word – the scriptures – and be comforted!

Take, O take me as I am. Summon out what I shall be. Set a seal upon my heart, and live in me. Amen.

Fr Damian Harrison-Miles, July 2026