

ST PETER'S CHURCH. BRACKLEY



**“LOVING GOD,
LOVING EACH OTHER,
LOVING BRACKLEY”**

*Lord of creation,
whose glory is around and within us:
open our eyes to your wonders,
that we may serve you with reverence
and know your peace in our hearts,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*





Rev'd Rob Woods writes.....

Christian Hedonism

...you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8)

For many, the words in the title are totally opposed. However, is Christian Hedonism really an oxymoron?

Well, the American preacher and theologian John Piper uses this provocative term to shine a light on an important truth found in Scripture.

He summarizes his thought like this: 'God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.'

In other words, there is no competition between our ultimate joy and God's glory. In fact, the way to magnify Jesus is to truly delight in him. Isn't that a wonderful truth?

If you think that it is, I think it will be helpful to pray for the following three things.

First, let's pray for - True Delight

Delight yourself in the Lord (Psalm 37:4). Rejoice in the Lord always (Phillipians 4:4).

Paul, the author of the letter to the Phillipians, wrote these words from a prison cell. According to his circumstances, he had every reason not to rejoice. Yet, because of what Jesus has done, he not only rejoiced in Christ but commanded others to do the same.

The good news is that God does not command us to do the impossible. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). As we grow in our relationship with Christ, we will grow in our delight of who he is and what he has done.

What does this mean for us as a church? Well, I think it's worth asking, what would this true delight in Christ look like during a Sunday service?

You may not want to be overly expressive during sung worship at church. That's OK (at least I hope it is!). Regardless of what it looks like *externally*, however, it's worth asking whether we are truly delighting in God *internally*.

Doesn't Christ deserve that we truly delight in him?

Second, let's ask God for - Stronger Desires

*"My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.
(Jeremiah 2:13).*

I love this line from the famous hymn Love Divine, All Loves Excelling:

Take away our love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.

The hymn writer was realistic about the reality of misplaced love. We sin (disobey Jesus) because we love sinning. We can't help but love. Therefore, part of the antidote for misplaced love is to grow in our love for Jesus. We need the expulsive power of a greater affection. When we taste the spring of living water, we won't dig broken cisterns. Abundant life, the only true satisfaction, is found in Jesus alone. When we grasp that, we won't want to turn elsewhere. Therefore, in a sense, it's the weakness of our desires that is the issue.

Here's how C.S. Lewis puts it:

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

I find that quote incredibly helpful. We need stronger desires. We need a greater love for Jesus.

To cultivate this love, I've found it helpful to meditate on who he is and what he has done.

Third, let's pray for -Sorrowful Rejoicing
...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2 Corinthians 6:10)

I know that so many in our church family are suffering in so many ways. Therefore, it's helpful to remember that life with Jesus here and now will include both sorrow *and* joy.

I am comforted that the joy that Jesus gives is supernatural. It's nothing like fleeting happiness. True joy is a ballast for the soul that steadies our faith in the roughest of storms. Each of us will face sorrow. When that is the case, let us pray that we may be sorrowful and yet always rejoicing.

I wonder what you think a Church marked out by 'inexpressible joy' would look like? Can you imagine how attractive it would be? Thinking personally, how would your life change if your heart was flooded with a greater sense of supernatural joy? Use the answers to those questions to inspire your prayers. Let's ask our heavenly Father for the gift of true delight, stronger desires, and sorrowful rejoicing. Will you join me in praying for these three realities to mark us out at St Peter's?

With all of this in mind, the Curate urges you — become a proper hedonist! However, maybe don't quote me on just that last sentence.

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Saturday 20th September

9:30am-3pm (give an hour/more)

St Peter's

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Cleaning, mowing, odd jobs

Soup and bread lunch at 12 noon



HARVEST FESTIVAL

SUNDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER

10.00AM

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ALL WELCOME



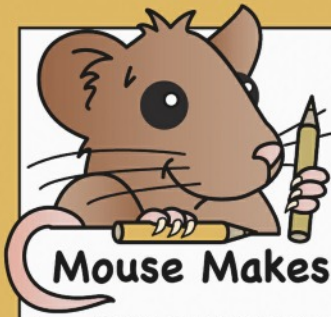
PRAISE EVENING

TUESDAY 23rd SEPT, 7.30 PM

ST PETER'S CHURCH, BRACKLEY



A TIME OF PRAYER AND SINGING, WITH CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP MUSIC



Mouse Makes



"May the people **praise** you **God**...
The **land yields** its harvest, God,
our God **blesses** us."
- from Psalm 67:5-6

"**Honour** the **Lord** with your
wealth and the
first part of
your **harvest**."
- Proverbs 3:9

"Let us fear and respect the Lord our God.
He gives **autumn** and **spring** rains
at the right time. He makes sure that we
have the harvest at just the right **time**."
- from Jeremiah 5:24

"God... gives you **rain** from
heaven and good harvests
at the right times. He gives
you plenty of **food** and
fills your hearts with **joy**."
- from Acts 14:16-17



"So the one who **plants** is not
important, and the one who **waters**
is not important. Only **GOD** is
important because He is the one
who makes things **grow**."
- 1 Corinthians 3:7

D	E	B	R	E	A	D	C	R	O	P	S
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S	L	O	I	J	B	P	R	A	I	S	E
C	O	R	N	O	L	R	A	H	G	O	D
A	U	D	H	Y	E	I	I	A	S	L	S
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T	H	A	N	K	S	G	I	V	I	N	G
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M	O	U	R	U	R	W	A	T	E	R	S
D	M	A	B	A	R	N	P	I	C	K	S
S	U	N	F	I	E	L	D	R	E	A	P

Find the words in **bold** type in the bible quotes in the wordsearch then look for the words below too!

- PLOUGH • FIELD • SOIL • SCATTER • SOW • SEEDS • SUN
- REAP • PICK • CROPS • GRAIN • CORN • BARN • BREAD • THANKSGIVING

An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Ecclesiastes

'Meaningless! Meaningless!' This is how the book of Ecclesiastes begins (1:2), as it examines the futility of human experience *'under the sun'*. The author is named as *'The Teacher'* (1:1, Hebrew *qoheleth*), traditionally identified with King Solomon. Although focusing on life in the physical world, the book ends with, *'Fear God and keep his commandments'* (12:13).

Ecclesiastes reminds us of the limitation of human wisdom, which cannot find meaning and purpose without God:

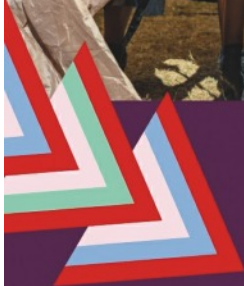
Our strivings *'under the sun'* can only lead to disillusionment (1:5–11). Therefore, we need to accept the life God gives us and enjoy it to the full.

Wisdom is given to those who please God (2:26). Such wisdom cannot solve all problems (1:16–18), or secure enduring reward (2:12–17). We cannot control our immediate future, resulting in uncertainty (6:12), and there are difficult questions about life and death itself (9:1–3). In response, we need to understand our human limitations before God.

God has ordered all things in their time; things we cannot change or fully anticipate: *'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven'* (3:1–15).

However, the world is not fundamentally chaotic or irrational, as it is ordered by God: *'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.'* (3:11). We should remember our Creator when we are young before the infirmities of advanced age stop us from enjoying the good things of life (12: 1-8).

In summary, Ecclesiastes shows us how to live meaningfully and joyfully by placing God at the centre of our life, while trusting and obeying our Creator.




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The Season Of Creation

As we enter the month of September, many churches will spend some time focusing on the wonders of creation, with Harvest Festivals or other types of service. For some time now, the Church of England has named the period between 1st September and 4th October as Creationtide, or the Season of Creation, where we can give thanks to God for his gift to us in creation. It was good to witness an uplifting in the recent meeting of General Synod, where further liturgical resources were discussed.

As well as giving thanks to God, this period of time provides us with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to care for all that God has made. As a Diocese, we share in the commitment of the Church of England to become net carbon zero by 2030, an ambitious target, but one that is very important, and reminds us of the fifth Mark of Mission, 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. Maybe this is a month when you might like to think afresh about you can do to help reach the target.

I am so encouraged to hear of churches that are engaging with Eco Church and delight that we now have some 'gold churches' amongst us. What an example they are!

Amongst the resources for Creationtide on the Church of England website, I came across this beautiful passage:

*In every acorn
there is the potential for a forest;
In every apple pip
there is the potential for an orchard;
In every soul
there is the potential for your kingdom
to be established;
full of joy and peace and love.
Lord, may your kingdom come
in us and in all your creation.*

May this be our prayer

+ Debbie



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