

Vol.64 No 4 April 2024

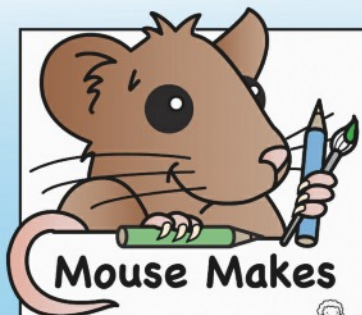
Online Edition

# ST PETER'S CHURCH. BRACKLEY



**“LOVING GOD,  
LOVING EACH OTHER,  
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## Mouse Makes



How many times had the risen Jesus revealed himself to the disciples before this?

Read  
John 21:14



How many disciples were there?  
Who were they?

Read John 21: 11

Some time after Jesus had risen a few of His disciples met together to go fishing.

They fished all night but caught nothing. As the sun rose a man on the shore asked;

"Have you caught anything?"

"Not a thing" they answered.

He said to them "Throw your net out onto the right side of the boat and you will catch some."

So they did and they and they caught so many fish they could not pull in the net.

Then John recognised the man, "It is the Lord!"



**READ**  
the story in  
**John 21**

How many fish did they catch?  
Read John 21: 11



DISCIPLES • TIBERIAS • SEA • SIMON PETER • THOMAS • NATHANAEL • JOHN • DAY  
FISHING • BOAT • NIGHT • CAUGHT • NOTHING • WATER • SHORE • FISH • CAST • NET  
RIGHT • FIND • HAUL • LORD • FULL • LAND • FIRE • BREAD • BREAKFAST • JESUS

Colour in all the fish

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## ***Revd. Rob Wood writes***



### Are You Being Foolish?

Unfortunately, I think I can be a little gullible. If someone tells me something, why wouldn't I believe them? Maybe it's the inner optimist, or the desire to see the best in people. Now, this approach to life does not cause too much damage. That is, until April fool's day rolls around! Thankfully, I have never fallen for anything too horrendous. Let's just hope the treasurer does not tell me to announce on Sunday morning that a new gold-plated church roof is imminent!

Of course, even I can spot the odd April fools' joke. Often, the giveaway is when the news seems simply too good to be true. Most people, even optimists, will have this inner voice which says, 'that can't be right, can it?!'.

This got me thinking, how are the claims we make about Jesus received? It's wonderful to have been a part of Hope Explored, which is a course designed for those wanting to explore more about the Christian faith. The invitation Jesus offers is rather staggering, isn't it? Full and free forgiveness. Restored relationship with God. Too good to be true? Only for the gullible and foolish?

Alongside a sense the gospel might be too good to be true, some in our church have voiced how challenging it is to be a Christian. There are different reasons for this. For some, it's the reality of suffering. For others, it is the cost involved in following Jesus. Is it foolish to keep following Christ when the cost can feel so great?

Well, my two favourite parables tell us how staggeringly amazing it is to know Jesus and acknowledges that there is also a cost to following him. Despite these two realities, to trust Christ is far from foolish.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-46).

One theologian defines God's kingdom as God's people, in God's place, under God's rule. Think Adam and Eve, in Eden, under his instruction to eat freely from any tree except one. Think of Israel, in the promised land, called to obey God. Or Christians who are God's treasured possession, aliens and exiles on this earth knowing our true home in heaven awaits us, and who bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two staggering realities about this kingdom described in the parables. First, the Kingdom is of immense value. It is so valuable that nothing in this world can compare.

Why is it worth so much? Well, it's because of the King of the Kingdom. He created all things. Yet, Christ died so that we may live. The more we know about the king of the kingdom, the more we see how precious and valuable it is to be a part of it. Also, this pearl and treasure will never drop in value. It is not sensitive to economic downturns and recessions. It has eternal value.

Did you notice one man seems to have almost stumbled over this precious treasure, whereas the other was seeking the pearl of great price? However one may come to faith, the result is an acknowledgement that Jesus is more precious than anything else this world can offer. Some may see this as foolish, but to recognise his worth is truly wise.

Second, the parables tell us that there is a cost to following Jesus. Some will consider you foolish to count the cost and live for Christ. I'm aware of how challenging the recent sermon series has been. It was a healthy corrective for me. Perhaps through familiarity, it's easy to forget how challenging the call of Christ is.

There are many costs, of course. Perhaps it's the general price in your life of submitting to the king. If every one of my desires chimed with God's will, something would seem a little suspect. There will be clashes between our desires and God's. To be in his kingdom means that the king of the kingdom gets to rule and call the shots in our lives. For some, it feels difficult to be faithful to Christ's teaching on marriage. Others find it challenging to be generous with their talents, treasure, and time. Or perhaps it's the cost of forgiving others when we would rather hold the grudge. Whatever it might be, being a Christian carries a cost. There is another king on the throne of our hearts. Some may see this as foolish, but again, it is what wisdom looks like.

Did you see how the two individuals in the parables responded to the invaluable treasure and precious pearl? In response to its value, both

individuals gave everything. This wasn't a begrudging sacrifice. No, it was a response of joy. The Bible makes clear we cannot earn God's love. This cost is not an entry fee to God's kingdom. We cannot purchase the forgiveness Jesus gives. However, we can seek to respond to grace with gratitude. Whatever the cost of following Jesus, it is a big understatement to say it is worth it. However, it is only those who truly perceive the value of the Kingdom that all other things look dispensable in its place.

The martyred missionary, Jim Elliot, said, 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.' That helpfully sums up these parables, doesn't it?

Too good to be true? Too costly? I wonder what question do you think more often? Either way, to give everything in response to this treasure and pearl is the very opposite of foolish. Let us endeavour to grow in our realization of how valuable God's kingdom is.

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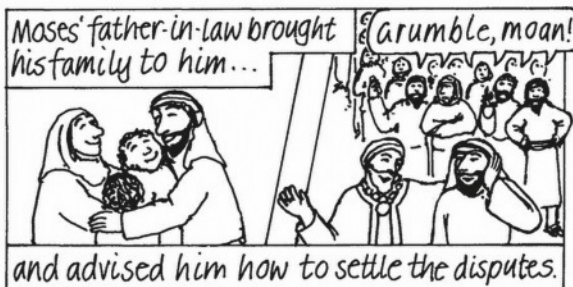
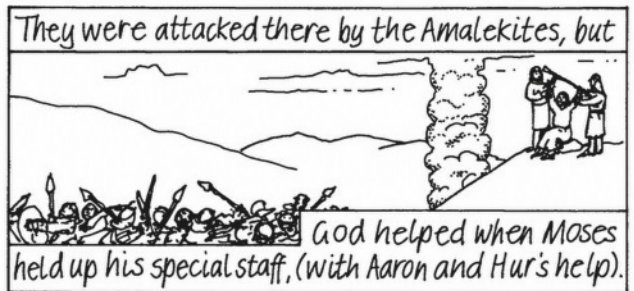
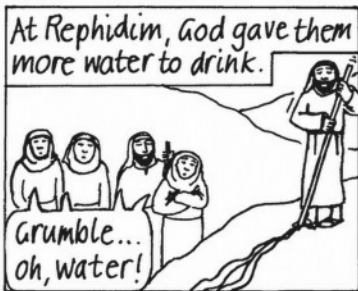
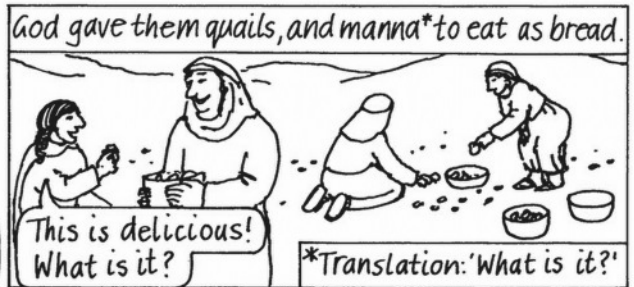


# Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Exodus chapters 15:22 to 19:2

God had rescued the Hebrews from Egypt, and was leading them to their new land. But after 3 days...

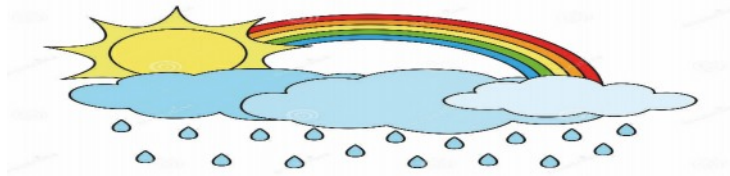


## The Rainbow

The world was so wicked that God made it rain  
For forty long days and long nights  
The floodwaters covered both mountain and plain  
They covered the highest of heights!

But Noah survived, because he – free from guilt  
Kept the Word of his God in his mind  
So he and his kin, in the ark he had built  
Lived with two beasts of every kind.

They floated by night and they floated by day  
No sign of the land could they spy;  
Till at last came the day when the flood drained away  
And a rainbow was seen in the sky.



And God said to Noah, "You see that bright bow?  
"That rainbow up there in the sky?  
"Now I've put it there as a sure sign to show  
"Of a promise twixt mankind and I.

"In future you'll know that I won't make it rain  
"So the whole earth is flooded that deep.  
"Now the rainbow is there and will be again –  
"And you'll know that this promise I'll keep."

On days when it seems that the rain just won't go  
And the floodwaters fill us with fear;  
At last comes the sun and the bright coloured bow –  
Our God made that rainbow appear.

*By Nigel Beeton*



## General Synod backs action to tackle biodiversity crisis



The General Synod has backed a series of measures to promote biodiversity on C of E land, from churchyards as havens of wildlife and plants, to the stewardship of agricultural and forestry land.

Members of the Synod welcomed progress already made by the Church Commissioners, the National Church Institutions, dioceses, parishes, cathedrals, and schools to manage their land for climate and nature.

The Synod approved further action to increase biodiversity including work towards drawing up environmental policy and land management plans for Dioceses and the recording of biodiversity in church green spaces.

The Synod also backed a request for the Church Commissioners to report back within three years on their progress in enhancing and supporting biodiversity across their agricultural and forestry land.

Introducing the debate at the Synod, the C of E's lead Bishop for the Environment, Graham Usher, said: "We are one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world - 2% of species are already extinct - 41% of species have declined since 1970, 26% of our mammals are at risk of extinction and 97% of UK's wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s.

"We need to act now to help the diversity of life on this single island planet home we share."

Bishop Graham said that churchyards are home to a range of wildlife. In many parishes the churchyard is the only remaining 'species-rich' grassland untouched by post Second World War cultivation and development. He added that in urban areas, churchyards are often the only green space.

"Our churchyards should be places of the living, not just the dead," he added.





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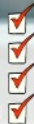


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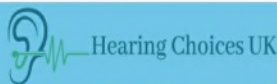
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