

22 May 2022

Welcome to our Christian Aid service today

Prayer

Come if you're healthy, come if you're hurt.
Come if you're hopeful, come if you're sad.
Let God's light shine upon you.
Let God's life fill you.
Let God bring you healing and hope today.

Song: *Let all creation sing before the Lord*

All Age Apostles creed active

ALL: We believe in God,
(Point up)
the Father
(Cross two fingers from both hands)
almighty,
(Raise two fists)
who sent
(Point a finger)
Jesus
(Touch each palm)
into
(praying hands)
the world.
(raise hands to side)
He came as a baby
(rock a baby)
Born of the holy spirit
Was crucified,
(Lift arms to side)
died
(Drop head)
And was buried.
(Curl up)
On the third day
(Hold 3 fingers up)
He rose again from the dead

(Raise arm up)
He ascended into heaven
(Lift both arms above head)
Where he prays for us continually.
(Praying hands)
Praise the lord
(Lift hands up high)
Halleluia!

Song: Everlasting God

Reading: 22.1-3, 5b

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

5 the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Song: *All who are thirsty*

Prayer

God of light and life,
you see all our problems and our pains:
help us to open our hearts and minds to you,
to receive your healing and forgiveness,
and to learn how we can bring hope and
healing to others.
Amen.

Song: *God of all comfort, God of compassion,*

Reading: *Matthew 3.1-10*

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”^[a]

⁴ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Reflective activity: Where have you been?

Use a world map to think about a different country that you know about or have visited. Thank God for this nation and praise him for the glories of nations. How might today’s nations need healing? Pray for the healing of the nations

All age activity : Christian Aid video & quiz

1. In what year was Christian Aid founded?
1933 / 1945 / 1949
2. What was Christian Aid’s original name?

Salvation Aid
The Inter-Church Aid & Refugee Service
Mission of Christ

3. What are the three P’s Christian Aid works in now?
4. Christian Aid give emergency support in ...

P _ _ _ _ _ cal violence

N _ t _ _ _ al disasters

5. What major tech company became carbon neutral in 2007?
6. How many people in Zimbabwe has Christian Aid’s work helped in the climate crisis?
12,000 / 18,000 / 27,000
7. True or False: Wasting less food is a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
8. Which iconic New York landmark is completely powered by wind?
Trump Towers
Statue of Liberty
Empire State Building
9. Where is Christian aid supporting those facing emergency climate crisis?
H _ _ _ ti
P _ ili _ _ _ nes

Sermon: Diana Bensted , Matthew 3:1-10

How are you at decluttering?

Anyone who knows me, knows that this is the thing that I find most difficult. I think part of it is the ex teacher in me who was always saving bits and pieces, because they could become useful. Hasn’t really changed with my own business - there is yarn everywhere!

In my battle with clutter, I have often sought others advice and help, online and in person – I have a couple of friends, who help on a regular basis – Thanks Sue and Julia! But I have also found a really great resource online, Noni of ‘a slob comes clean’ has been blogging (that is writing an online diary) about her trials as she decluttered her home.

She has a few really basic principles and the most basic is how to declutter without making a bigger mess, so you never take everything out of a space and then sort it (because you will always be distracted, and the pile will stay there) but apply the following steps

- 1 – remove the trash – rubbish
- 2 – remove the easy stuff – and put it in its home – the place you would look for it first.
- 3 – put Duhs in the donate box – that is things you should have got rid of a couple of years (decades) ago
- 4 – ask the two questions. Q1 – if I needed this where would I look first – and take it there Q2 if I needed this would I know that I had one!
- 5 – make it fit – this relates to the container concept – this is the reality that everything in your home is a container and that the key word is ‘contain’ no spilling out or overstuffed spaces – the shelf where the books are, the kitchen cupboards, each room, up to the point where the home is also the container and you have to have space to live in it.

I expect at this point you are thinking what are you talking about Diana and how does this relate to our passage in Matthew.

Well I want to focus on the smallest part of this passage – the axe.

Remember in the passage -

The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

What do we mean by good fruit – in the natural world it is the result of a plant producing what it was designed to produce. In the Bible the word fruit is used to describe a persons outward actions – their words and activities – that glorify god, and so Gods will is accomplished.

‘These outward actions come from the fruits that the Holy Spirit gives us which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ (Galatians 5:22–23).

We all know that to produce good fruit, we need to nurture our Christian selves, make time for praying, reading our bibles, worshipping on Sunday or when we can, talking about our faith to others, and having fellowship with other Christians.

However we often have reasons that we are not doing these things – we are busy, working, doing too much, to fit God in our lives,

So, what if we apply the Axe to our lives in a similar way to the decluttering...

Step 1 – remove the trash – the rubbish – is there something in your life that really is rubbish – playing silly games on your phone, spending hours on Facebook, we do seem to be attached to our phones – what about

leaving it in a different room so that it is not so distracting?

2 – remove the easy stuff – is there something you are doing, that is getting in the way of praying, – do you watch too much tv – switch it off, Do you get distracted – find a place to pray that is quiet,

3 – put Duhs in the donate box – that is things you should have got rid of a couple of years (decades) ago – to get rid of things in our heads sometimes we have to acknowledge that they are there – do you hold some resentment to someone, do you get obsessed with watching the news, do you have an addiction that really needs to be dealt with? do you think that you will fail when you pray, that somehow you are not good enough, or not faithful enough – God never thinks that – so neither should you. Chuck that thought right out.

4 – ask the two questions.

Q1 – if I needed this where *should* I look first – I'm changing this to should because we should always take our thoughts, worries and prayer to God, we should look in the bible first and often we rely on our own understanding.

Q2 if I needed this would I know that I had one! Do you know that YOU have the ability to talk to God – that is all that prayer is... Maybe this is the voice in our head which says that I'm no good with prayer, or my prayers are never answered, how would I know if I am able to do this...

5 – Make it fit – Our lives are all really busy, but like a container, we need to get rid of things in order to make space for God in

our lives, leaving space for us to breathe into him.

And maybe, just maybe, He will come into our container of life, and spill out and overflow in his goodness – then we won't even need the axe because we will be bearing fruit.

. The love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control of the fruit of the Spirit. It is not fear but faith that inspires our action to help to create a fairer world and protect creation.

Wouldn't it be great if we could end with the vision of a fruitful future of abundant energy, a stable economy, of resources available to all, where everyone's lives are not worse but better than they are today.

In Matthew's account of John the Baptist in this passage, we see a tree with an axe lying at the root. The axe has not yet been lifted to begin the work of cutting down.

The axe John wields conveys the urgent awakening that is needed for a change of lifestyle. And as such, it serves as a powerful symbol for the times we are living through and the climate crisis.

The axe is there to prune and cut back what gets in the way of our connection with God, each other and creation, for the flourishing of all and the glory of God. Rather than seeing our calling to care for creation as a deprivation and a denial, we rather see it as the axe breaking the chains that bind us to a diminished way of life.

The axe CAN break our chains – the chains of chains of injustice. Busy-ness, resentment, regret, self-limitation, and what do we get from this – a freedom to be who we were always meant to be – a child of God,

Metaphorically, John puts the axe in our hands, it's lying there at the foot of the tree. What will we do with it? Ignore it or use it?

Song: Amazing grace

Prayers of intercession

Creator God,
cultivator of our faith,
thank you for the privilege of living in this global garden
planted to bear your fruit, to delight our tongues, to fill our bellies, to energise our bodies.

You have given us life in all its fullness.
You have given us life, yet millions still hunger.

Take our gifts of money and use them to help Christian Aid support communities throughout the world, and partners who hunger to provide. But may our support not end here. May we be the seeds from which your kingdom grows.

In our hunger for peace, we pray for Ukraine, and Russia, that there may be a negotiation, and a peaceful resolution. But may our concern for them not stifle our concern for Zimbabwe, Afghanistan or Syria and all those other places to whom our hearts have become hardened through over-familiarity.

Lord we ask that
THEY WILL HUNGER NO MORE AND THIRST NO MORE

In our hunger for justice, we pray for people we know, that are suffering, our friends or family that may be in hospital, nursing care, or struggle with their mental health, We pray for those affected by the tornados and storms in Germany, may those that need it find shelter, and that the goodness of friends and neighbours help with the cleanup of fallen trees and damaged homes.

We also pray for those in worried about the cost of living, and who are in poverty in this country, those using food banks, and who are choosing whether to use power, or feed themselves or their children. May our concern for them not stifle our concern for Those around the world who suffer where there has been drought, the pandemic and conflict, who have been robbed of the ability to provide for their families, and all those known to us who hunger to provide for those they love in our global community. Lord we ask that
THE SUN WILL NOT STRIKE THEM, NOR ANY SCORCHING HEAT

In our hunger for compassion we pray for Our Government, and opposition, for Leaders, and Civil service. Leaders of countries, the UN, NATO and more, but also Local leaders, in the Counties and boroughs of the UK. But may our concern for them not stifle our concern for your little ones, children who go to bed hungry, whose parents struggle to provide for them in times of desperate drought. Lord we ask that
GOD WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES

And in our hunger, we pray that you will fill us with your hope, your passion and your life,

that we may go out from this place to give,
act and pray.

So all who hunger to provide may be filled
to overflowing.

In the name of Christ,
farmer, gardener and cultivator, AMEN.

Blessing

In the name of God who plants the seed of
justice:

Be hungry.

In the name of Christ who hangs on the tree
of love:

Be fruitful.

And in the name of the Spirit who inspires
God's will in our hearts and our lives:

Be celebrated.

You are Christ's people,
here and throughout the world
now and forever. Amen.