

*Christ Church New  
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

*5 September 2021*

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*Welcome*

Risen from the grave,  
you fill the world  
with the wonder of new life.  
Glory be to you, Risen Lord:  
**you make all things new.**

Ascended to the Father's  
right hand,  
you carry our humanity  
to the heart of Godhead.  
Glory be to you, Ascended Lord:  
**you make all things new.**

At the Father's right hand  
you ever intercede for us.  
Glory be to you, Reigning Lord:  
**you make all things new.**

Present in our world by your Spirit,  
you bring resurrection life to us  
in the midst of time,  
so that eternity might be planted  
in our hearts.  
Glory be to you, Immanent Lord:  
**you make all things new.**

Song: Jesus hope of the nations

*Prayer*

Song: Living hope

*Confession*

Living Lord,  
whose word brings life

and love conquers all;  
when we are flooded with fear  
and deadened by despair;  
**speak the word that brings new life.**

Loving Lord,  
who has gone ahead  
on the road to eternity  
and opened up the way for us;  
when we lose our way  
and stumble into the ditch;  
**reach out and raise us up.**

Levelling Lord,  
before whose empty tomb  
all stand amazed;  
when we compare ourselves  
to others and find them wanting;  
**humble us and break our pride.**

Listening Lord,  
whose word brings new life;  
when we do not heed your voice  
and live as though you are still dead;  
**Shake us awake  
and whisper your ways and will within  
our soul  
until we are deafened  
to our own wants  
and desire only you  
in all your risen beauty.**

*All age reading*

The story of Joseph so far:

**42** When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, **“Why do you just keep looking at each other?”**

<sup>2</sup> He continued, **“Go down and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”**

**43** Now the famine was still severe in the land. <sup>2</sup> So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, **“Go back and buy us a little more food.”**

**<sup>14</sup> And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man**

**44** Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: **“Fill the men’s sacks with as much food as they can carry... <sup>2</sup>Then put my silver cup in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack.”**

<sup>4</sup>The brothers had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, “Go after those men at once, and ask, **‘Why have you repaid good with evil? <sup>5</sup>Isn’t this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.’**”

The brothers replied:

**<sup>9</sup> If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord’s slaves.”**

<sup>11</sup> Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. <sup>12</sup>And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack.<sup>13</sup> At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

On speaking to Joseph, Judah said:

**<sup>33</sup> “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place Benjamin, and let the boy return with his brothers. <sup>34</sup>How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.”**

*Reading:* Genesis 45.1-7 read by Susan Rogers

**45** Joseph was no longer able to control his feelings in front of his servants, so he ordered them all to leave the room. No one else was with him when Joseph told his brothers who he was. <sup>2</sup>He cried with such

loud sobs that the Egyptians heard it, and the news was taken to the king's palace. <sup>3</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But when his brothers heard this, they were so terrified that they could not answer. <sup>4</sup>Then Joseph said to them, “Please come closer.” They did, and he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people's lives. <sup>6</sup>This is only the second year of famine in the land; there will be five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor reaping. <sup>7</sup>God sent me ahead of you to rescue you in this amazing way and to make sure that you and your descendants survive.

*Sermon:* Hidden hope of God

Did you know that scores of dolphins, sharks and whales have been spotted along the coast of northern Ireland? And even a thresher shark (he’s got a long skinny tail) jumping right out of the water at Rathlin Island, Ballycastle on the very top of the northern edge of county Antrim. For anyone looking to spot such beautiful creatures Pdraig Whooley of the Irish Whale and Dolphin group says you need: a calm and still sea, binoculars and a good location not stuck in an estuary but a spot on the headland with an open view of the sea.

Padriag’s top tips for spotting dolphins strike me as pretty good tips for spotting hope in a troubled world, for spotting God’s hand at work in troubled times and in the troubled times of Joseph. From chapters 37 all the way through to 45, Joseph could not see God at work. Joseph aged 17 – I’m sure didn’t see the fulfilment of god’s plan in his brothers selling him into slavery, in being trafficked by his own family. Neither was God’s hope found in Jacob’s grief and distress, nor was it in the despair, shame and deep, deep sense of guilt

felt by all Joseph's brothers. Neither was God's hope found in the famine that had begun and the effects of famine must have been seen all around with death, disease and despair destroying friendships, families and communities. It was only when the chaos had settled, and Joseph sees his brothers in the queue for food does he begin to understand how God can use him now.

But Joseph is not the straightforward action hero you might want to see in the film about Joseph. He leans towards being a trickster and maybe even being manipulative, hiding his identity, hiding their monies for the corn on the first trip to Egypt for food and on their second trip in a more assertive way, hiding his cup in Benjamin's sack, sending his servant to catch them in the act of unknowingly carrying it away.

Do you have a favourite cup? Do you have a particular mug for coffee in the morning? Joseph's cup was special too. We learn that this silver cup, was not only an expensive but also one that he used for divination. Apparently in those days the future was read through the appearance of water in a cup and Joseph it seems had learnt this skill. Here is a man who dabbles in alternative methods to discern the future. We do not see Joseph spending hours praying like Daniel or Elijah or Samuel, we don't overhear conversations between Joseph and God like we do for Noah or Abraham. Here we see Joseph come to a position of power and influence and looking to a cup of water for direction, instead of the living God. How often do we fall prey to this habit too? After times of hurt, difficulty, of storms and trials, we build for ourselves success for all the world to see, walls of protection and our own way of determining the future but we forget to look to the Lord for his leading?

But reminded of home, of his dear father, the walls of Joseph's position crumble with emotion and he is overcome with tears. For

now, he sees. Now he sees just how God has been at work, despite the cruelty of his brothers, despite the grief of his father, the dreams that he dreamt were true and the people of God would indeed be saved from death. You meant it for harm, but God meant it for good.

The story of Joseph is a long and stormy one but by chapter 45 Joseph can now truly see, truly read the waters, and spot the glory of the Lord on the horizon. He can see like dolphins dipping in and out of the sea, God's hand at work in his life so he declares to his brothers: I am Joseph. I am the boy who had those dreams that God would provide for his people. I am the symbol of God's hope for our family to survive. Joseph's family was 12 brothers, each brother then formed one of the tribes of Israel. I am Joseph, is like the phrase we hear God use when Moses asks God what his name is, his reply is "I am" (Exodus 3.14). It reminds us of the promise in the dreams that Joseph was given, and of the promise-bearer God. It also tells the brothers listening to a weeping Joseph and to us reading this story that the 'I am' is not dead. Joseph is not dead in Egypt, he's not dead in prison, but alive and well and giving out food to the nations.

I am the living bread, I am the gate, I am the resurrection and the life. God is the I am of every story. Joseph's, yours and mine. The I am is the God who does not stay dead but is alive, who sees dust and breathes life, who sees dry bones and says you can live, who hears the cries of the lonely and hurting and the downright bored and says you can live again. The God of hope, the god who gave those dreams to Joseph is the same God who led his people out of Egypt and across the desert into the promised land, the same God who sent Jesus into our world, the same God who lifted up the broken, sick and despised and restored them to glory. And it's the same god who looks upon each of us today and offers us a seat on top of headland with a

calm sea in front, hands us the binoculars and says – look. Look to the future. All that the past has been has gone. I have been at work wherever possible, and now look for the hope that is my hope given to you like a dolphin breaking a wave. God says to each of us: I love you; I want you to prosper and flourish, walk with me, learn to follow me and I will show you my hope, my dream, and my promise. God's ways may be hidden, we might even get in the way sometimes, but God is always seeking to show his hope and care in and through us in our world. Let's look for his hand, for God saw Joseph and his brothers and even though they meant it for evil, God meant it for good. Let's look for his hand of hope.

### *Communion*

*Share peace together*

Song: Living bread in mercy broken

For the bread we eat day by day:  
**God be blessed forever**

For the bread of the great day  
That feeds us for new life  
**God be blessed forever**

Jesus said: I am the living bread.  
Touch all our lives and shape us for your  
new day  
**God be blessed forever**

Nourish us with bread for the journey  
Disciples on your way  
This day and always

**Come, Holy Spirit**  
**Feed us with your love**  
**And renew us with your life**

**We eat to remember.**

For the cup that sustains and delights  
**God be blessed for ever**

For the cup  
That seals the covenant  
**God be blessed for ever**

Jesus said: I am the vine  
Make our hearts glad and lives safe.  
**God be blessed for ever**

**Come, Holy Spirit**  
**Fill us with your love**  
**And renew us with your life**

**We drink to remember.**

*Intercession: Peter*

*Song: It is well with my soul*

### *Blessing*

Joining with all creation  
in celebrating your life,  
and anticipating the  
resurrection song  
that all shall sing;  
**may our lives give voice**  
**to the song of the angels**  
**and our footsteps find**  
**their way to the empty tomb:**  
**rejoicing that all shall be made new,**  
**and ever anew. Amen.**