

## Churchwardens' Chat

A very warm welcome to the Abbey today.

**Tonight at 5pm: Evening Prayer:** Hymns: 391, 349, 250,  
Psalm: 119: 137–52, Readings: Exodus 19: 10–25, Matt 8: 23–34

***This week we pray especially for:***

**The sick:** Zorina Bell, Pauline Culyer, Isabel Davidson, Marion O'Connor,  
Julia Parker, Roy Pulsford, Jennie Rackham, James

**Recently deceased:** Kathleen Terry

All who have lost loved ones

**Saturday 28 September Choral workshop day and concert**

**Matthew Coleridge Requiem in a Day** – rehearsal starts at 10.30am, concert  
7pm – 8.30pm. More info. <https://matthewcoleridge.com/wymondham>  
Concert tickets for non-singers £10, (under 25s £5).

**HARVEST FESTIVAL on SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER**

On Sunday October 6<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate Harvest Festival. This is a time to  
give thanks for the food we enjoy, as well as to pray for those who are not so  
fortunate: especially those in places where climate change is making things  
even harder.

Please bring contributions for the Foodbank which operates in the Hall: there  
is ever-increasing demand for what they provide.

**Harvest Parish Lunch** will be provided by the Rotary Club of Wymondham.  
Please book places as usual with Joyce Reynolds.

**Harvest Choral Evensong** will be at 5pm. Music will include Dyson's setting  
in F for Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and Howells' anthem 'Like as the Hart'.

**Pastoral visits:** If you know anyone who might welcome a pastoral visit  
please let Fr Andrew know: [vicar@wymondhamabbey.org.uk](mailto:vicar@wymondhamabbey.org.uk)  
Tel: 01953 605671 (office) Mobile: 07543 593903 (direct).

**Parish Giving Scheme** Thank you for your regular giving. If you are not on the  
scheme you can offer cash or card donations at any of the giving stations.  
You can support the Abbey at [www.wymondhamabbey.org.uk/giving](http://www.wymondhamabbey.org.uk/giving)

**Wymondham Abbey ♦ 22 September 2024 ♦ Sung Eucharist**

**The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity**

**The hymns, readings and prayers for the day:**

<b>Hymn</b>	<b>NHWS</b>	<b>255</b>	<b><i>One more step along the world I go</i></b>	
<b>Gloria</b>			<b><i>St Peter's Mass</i></b>	<i>Goodrich</i>
<b>Hymn</b>	<b>NHWS</b>	<b>163</b>	<b><i>I, the Lord of the sea and sky</i></b>	<i>Here I am</i>
<b>Hymn</b>	<b>NHWS</b>	<b>204</b>	<b><i>Lord, for the years</i></b>	
<b>Setting</b>			<b><i>Mass of St Thomas</i></b>	<i>David Thorne</i>
<b>Anthem</b>			<b><i>There's a wideness in God's mercy</i></b>	<i>Bevan</i>
<b>Hymn</b>	<b>NHWS</b>	<b>300</b>	<b><i>Soul of my Saviour</i></b>	<i>Anima Christi</i>
<b>Hymn</b>	<b>NHWS</b>	<b>179</b>	<b><i>Jesus, Prince and Saviour</i></b>	<i>St Gertrude</i>

### ***The Collect***

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:  
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,  
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city  
where we shall see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen**

### ***The first reading: Wisdom 1: 16 to 2: 1 and 12–22***

The ungodly by their words and deeds summoned death; considering him a friend, they pined away and made a covenant with him, because they are fit to belong to his company.

For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, ‘Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end, and no one has been known to return from Hades.

Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training.

He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange.

We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father.

Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God’s child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.

Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.’

Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hoped for the wages of holiness, nor discerned the prize for blameless souls;

### ***Gospel reading: Mark 9: 30–37***

Jesus and his disciples passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’

But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’

Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’

### ***Post Communion Prayer***

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### ***This week at Wymondham Abbey***

<b>Mon 23 Sept</b>	10am	Morning Prayer
	3.45pm	Evening Prayer
<b>Tue 24 Sept</b>	10am	Morning Prayer
	10.30am	Centering Presence
	3.45pm	Evening Prayer
<b>Wed 25 Sept</b>	10am	Morning Prayer
	10.30am	Said Eucharist
	10.30am	Crochet and Conversation
	11am	Guild team leaders’ meeting
	3.45pm	Evening Prayer
<b>Thur 26 Sept</b>	9.30am	Parent and toddler group
	10am	Morning Prayer
	3.45pm	Evening Prayer
	5.30pm	PCC meeting
<b>Fri 27 Sept</b>	10am	Morning Prayer
	10.30am	Burial of ashes
	3.45pm	Evening Prayer
<b>Sat 28 Sept</b>	9.30am–5.30pm	Come and sing Requiem rehearsal
	7pm– 8.30pm	Requiem performance
<b>Sun 29 Sept</b>	10.30am	Sung Eucharist
	5pm	Evening Prayer with hymns

# Sermon at Wymondham Abbey

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024

## Who is the greatest?

Mark 9.30-37

*They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.*

*Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'*

One of the glories of the Bible, one of its great riches, is that so many of its stories and sayings have layers of meaning. This is especially true of the sayings of Jesus. And as Christians we really want to delve into those layers, uncover the meanings, and learn what we should be thinking

and believing and doing. This is because Jesus is not simply telling us (and telling us simply) what to think and believe and do. He is revealing to us the mind and heart of God; and inviting us to fall in love with that mind and heart.

In our quest to listen well to Jesus (and there are many ways to do this) we have to remember a bit humbly how his words have actually reached us. We are hearing an English translation of a Greek version of what Jesus originally said in his own language, Aramaic. I'm going to come back to all this in a few weeks' time, on Bible Sunday (so be warned!). But for now, I'm just setting us up to hear the layers of meaning in the words we heard in the gospel reading.

These are the words I'd like us to think about:

*Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.*

and then

*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

The disciples have been arguing about their pecking order. To our polite, middle-class English ears that might sound rather unworthy behaviour, and certainly rather unChristian. In fact, social hierarchy then was much more pronounced and articulated than it is for us now. It was probably a pretty predictable conversation, especially as they were bonding as a group and had plenty of time as they trudged along to find things to argue about.

So, while Jesus might well have been upbraiding them a bit for not having anything better to talk about, more importantly he uses what they had been saying to make a teaching point. He makes a point about how we relate to each other. He takes their familiar ideas of hierarchy and greatness and completely upends them.

It's something we see Jesus doing so often. Sometimes he spells it out. *You have heard it said, but I say to you.....* Other times he just embodies it, he enacts it: when he sits with a Samaritan woman, for example, or goes to dinner at a tax-collector's house, or heals someone on the Sabbath day.

*If you want to be first, put yourself last*, Jesus says. Serve others. Serve everyone. Of course as he turns upside-down the whole notion of who is the greatest, he upends the very idea of being the greatest (or the least). And then there's a layer of irony that we get, from our perspective, and which clearly goes over the disciples' heads: that is, that the greatest example of putting yourself last and serving everyone else is Jesus himself. *He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited*, as Paul tells us, *but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave*. You can imagine those earliest audiences for Mark's gospel nudging each other at this point and whispering *he's talking about himself!*

I won't labour the moral for us, as we all know what Jesus is saying – to us. And we need all the help he can give us in the Holy Spirit to try to live up to it. A knowing nodding during the sermon, perhaps the thought that I might try to be a bit nicer, is not quite enough. And as always, as it should say on my side of the pulpit, *physician heal thyself*. For *physician* read *preacher*.... It's a tough

teaching, especially if you have been given great responsibility.

Jesus' next teaching, when he puts a wee child in their midst, develops his point. It's not a separate, new idea.

The surface meaning is not superficial. *Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me* definitely has implications for how we care for children, not least in church. Those implications include both a rigorous approach to safeguarding and an imaginative approach to our children's ministry.

But the meaning of Jesus' words is deeper and richer. Part of that rather emphatic idea of social hierarchy in Jesus' time, which I mentioned earlier, was that children had no status of their own or legal rights. So this was a powerful move on Jesus' part, a striking way to hammer home his previous point about the least being the greatest. The connection is also spelled out by something of a pun. In both Aramaic and Greek, the word for child could also mean slave. So the idea of serving others runs through both of Jesus' sayings.

Now I rather skipped over what I called the surface meaning of Jesus' words (*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me*): ie that we should treat children well. But let's come back to it, as a final thought. Looking after children, caring for them, is hard-wired into us, isn't it? It's why we are so horrified and even angered when we hear about any kind of harm being done to them. But caring for children well is not about cocooning them in cotton wool and saying yes to their every demand. I saw a very powerful example of this when I was last a vicar, which was in NW London. The parish was very deprived, and what in the jargon of local authorities was called 'hyper-diverse'. Next to the church was a church primary school, where I went regularly. Here many of the children were from single-parent families, often with older siblings who were in trouble, occasionally even already in jail. So at first I was taken aback by how apparently strict the key teachers were – especially the Head, and the Year 6 lead teacher. They seemed positively fierce. But the children loved them. At some deep level they knew that those teachers loved *them*, wanted the best for them, and were working flat out to give

them the best start in life. The teachers seemed incredibly bossy; but they were *serving* those children.

Appropriately for a church school, as they welcomed every child, they were welcoming the Jesus who looked out from an often terrified or angry child's eyes. Looked out, saying, *what are you going to do for me?*

Whether we're talking literally about children, or more widely about those who have the least in life, the challenge to us is the same. Jesus, through them, is saying *what are you going to do?*