



Rev Dave Brown
Rector of St Nicholas Stevenage & St Mary Graveley
2a North Road, Stevenage. Herts. SG1 4AT
Tel: 01438 213587
Email: revdmbrown@gmail.com



Briefing 26: Wednesday 19th August, 2020.

Dear friends,

The last prayer in the Bible comes in the penultimate verse; Revelation 22:20, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” It begins with the Amen, which means “let it be so” or “I heartily agree”, because the prayer is in response to the words of Jesus who says that he is “coming soon.”

Why is the apostle John so keen to see Jesus return? Read through the book of Revelation and you’ll find many answers, and I’m sure we would want to say “amen” to every one. He wants Jesus to return because the world is full of violence and evil. Because the church is persecuted and God’s people mistreated. Because life is hard and painful. Because sickness and death blight our lives. Because Satan is waging war against the church. Because God’s beautiful creation has been blighted. Because we are tired and weary of all these things. And because we know that when Jesus comes again each and every one of them will be put right.

The return of Jesus will usher in his perfect kingdom of justice and joy, of peace and perfection, of righteousness and healing, of God’s glory and majesty and love shining so brightly that we no longer need the sun! In the book of Revelation, the apostle John was given a glimpse of the glory of the risen Christ and the wonder of his eternal kingdom, and set against the backdrop of a world of suffering and sin and death, he can’t help but cry out “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

There have been times over the last weeks and months when I have done the same. Perhaps you have too. Our struggles may not be as severe as those in parts of the world where war and famine and drought or corruption or persecution are common, but don’t we all long for the day when the struggles are over, when evil is finally and fully vanquished and when God’s kingdom comes. And praying the Lord’s Prayer gives us an opportunity to do just that, to express our longing for that glorious day.

And strangely enough, focusing our eyes on what is to come, actually helps us in the present. With the hope of a day of justice, the injustices of this world can be borne more easily. With the hope of a day of glory and peace, the struggles and suffering we endure in this life will not crush us, because we know the best is yet to come. And should we face persecution for our faith, we need not fear. We can stand firm and resist, because our ultimate home is in the kingdom of Jesus. So whilst last week our focus on this part of the Lord’s prayer was about God’s kingdom coming now, this line also encourages us to lift our eyes to the end of time when God’s kingdom finally, fully comes.

How might you pray Your kingdom come? Here is another idea...

*Heavenly Father, thank you that one day your kingdom will come and your will **will** be done fully and perfectly on earth as in heaven. Thank you for that great and glorious hope of a perfect eternity, where sin and shame and suffering and death will be no more. Strengthen that hope within me I pray.*

Father, the world seems out of control. Thank you that isn’t true, and that history is heading towards your perfect end. Right now, Father, true justice seems a pipe dream. Thank you that one day your perfect judgements will be heard and justice will be done. Right now, Lord, worry and anxiety and fear often rule my heart because I don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Thank you that you do, and that I can trust you both in life and in death, because my future, through Christ, is in your eternal kingdom of love and peace and joy.

So please fill my heart afresh with hope and confidence in your coming kingdom, and your promises which cannot be broken. When blessings come in this life, Lord, may I rejoice in them, knowing that they are only a fraction of the joy that awaits me in your perfect kingdom. And when suffering and trials come in this life, Lord, may I rejoice in them too, knowing that they are only fleeting, and will not last, for there will be no evil in your eternal kingdom.

So come, Lord Jesus, come! May your Kingdom come! And as I wait, keep me patient and full of hope and anticipation, for the wonders you have prepared for those who love you.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

OTHER NEWS:

PRAY WITH US ON TUESDAY: Zoom prayer gathering at 7am-8am. Email Dave for an invite.

PRAY WITH US DAILY: If you sometimes struggle to know who to pray for and what to pray for them and you have a smartphone, then the PrayerMate App might help you. Download it free from the Appstore and join in. The instructions are easy to follow and there's a weekly list of prayer topics for our Benefice too. It's also a great way to keep in touch with the prayer needs of others in the congregation. Mike and Evelyn are managing that side of things. Please email Evelyn for more details on evelynjohnson86@hotmail.com

OFFICIAL RE-OPENING OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH: With the work done, the sliding doors fitted, and the pews back in the building, it's time for an official re-opening. Due to Covid-19 we can't have the grand celebration we wanted but the church will be open for visitors on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm, with tea and coffee available outside. To make the occasion, Bishop Michael will come along and cut the ribbon and lead us in a time of prayer at 12 noon. This will take place in the church yard so more people can gather safely.

We are therefore appealing for people to volunteer to serve the refreshments, perhaps in hour shifts, and for people to act as welcomers inside the building. **Karen Walker** will be coordinating the refreshments and **Steve Bamford** the welcomers. If you can help out on the day, please get in touch with them as soon as possible.

As part of the rededication of the building, we'd also like to organise for the Bible to be read out loud in church, in its entirety, from Sunday 6th September at 11am to Saturday 12th at 11:00am. This would be done in hour slots from 7am to 9pm, and ideally, with 2 people in church all the time. I'm coordinating this and will start taking bookings for chosen slots from next Sunday.

LEBANON EXPLOSION: If you'd like make a donation towards the work supporting those in need, here are 2 ways of doing that. The first gives details of the Barnabas Fund's appeal. The second is a link to the Facebook page of a church in Beirut run by some of our friends, Ivan and Debbie Fawzi.

<https://mailchi.mp/barnabasfund/beirut-lebanon-explosion-august-813734?e=d8a66ff27b>

<https://www.facebook.com/ResurrectionChurchBeirut>

CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN (and adults): Just 10 days left for anyone under 14 to earn themselves a £10 book voucher by learning the books of the Bible off by heart. Parents- encourage your children- and learn with them!

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS: Both churches will be holding their APCMs in September. If you are interested in standing for some of the vacant positions on either **PCC**- please do get in touch with me and we can chat about what is involved. Nomination forms will be up in church from Sunday. If you are not yet on the **Electoral Roll** but have been worshipping with us for more than 6 months or you live in the parish, please do join the electoral roll to show your commitment to the church. Forms will be available in church this Sunday and are attached.

FLOWERS: To place flowers in either church, either in memory of a loved one or in thanksgiving to God for his goodness (*perhaps at a special birthday or anniversary*), simply contact Chris Chambers for St Nicholas (tel 221409), or for Graveley, write your name on the rota in the church porch or speak to Marion Bracey (tel 350082). They will either keep the date free for your own display or use your donation to put some flowers in church for you.

CHURCH SITTERS/WELCOMERS REQUIRED: We are still looking for people willing to church sit and welcome passing visitors to St Nicholas on **Monday mornings from 10am-12noon. Wednesday afternoons from 2pm-4pm and Friday mornings from 10am-12noon.** If you'd be willing to take a turn at this, do let Steve or Karen know. Thank you.

THIS COMING SUNDAY, we will be focusing on the privilege and pattern of prayer. This follows on nicely from the series I've been writing on these recent update letters and so we will be looking again at Luke 11:1-13. Why not read the passage before you come along to church, and remember to bring your own Bible with you! The 9:30am service at St Nicholas will include a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service at St Mary's at 11:30am will be a Service of the Word. If you are yet to book in, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/873SKdhhSS47bC5G6> If you're not able to make it, do make sure you join us either live on Facebook or catch up later.

A short update will come out on Friday and there will be more news next week,

Yours in Christ,

Dave