



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 28: Wednesday 2nd September, 2020.

Dear friends,

Whilst we know that one day God's perfect kingdom will come, and under that perfect rule his will will be done here on earth as in heaven, it doesn't look like that now. Lots of things go on in this world which are outside God's perfect will: racism, exploitation and greed just to name 3! Won't it be wonderful when those things are banished for ever!

But we will soon find ourselves in treacherous waters if we think that God is somehow not in total control of this world now, with everything happening because of his permissive will (i.e. he is willing to let it happen) and under his sovereign control (i.e. that all things ultimately will work out as he designs). Without the full sovereignty of God, as this doctrine is known, we are likely to be blindsided by disasters, thrown off course by sickness and suffering, and left feeling isolated and hopeless in the face of trial and persecution, because if these things happen outside of God's control, then how can we turn to him for help and comfort?

But praise God, He is sovereign. He is in complete control. His will is always done in heaven, and ultimately, his will is always done here and now. Just as no sparrow falls to the ground without the will of the Father, so no hair on our head is lost, no sickness comes, no trial lands on our doorstep, without God's permission.

How is that comforting, you might ask? It's comforting because the Scriptures tell us that we are never tried beyond our ability to stand up under that trial. So no trial will overwhelm us if we keep our eyes on the Lord. And we are also told that all things work together for the good of those who love God. That means that even if **we** cannot see any reason why times of trial and struggle and sickness and persecution have come upon us, God can! And he promises that they will be for our good! What a tremendous comfort that is!

On an individual level, 2 stories from the Bible stand out as examples of this. The first is Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers and later imprisoned for something he did not do. But when his brothers feared that he would take retribution on them, this was his response: "*you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, thus saving many lives.*" Genesis 50:20.

The second account, of course, is the death of Jesus. Over the history of the world, there has never been a more evil act than the crucifixion of the perfect, righteous son of God. And yet, think what a glorious victory God won for us through that evil act!

And so when we don't understand events taking place in the world and evil seems to be getting the upper hand; or when we or those we love face times of trial, suffering or persecution, whilst we can pray "Lord get me out of here! Save me! Heal me! Change these circumstances!" Like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, we also need to be willing to pray Your will, not mine be done, Father. And as we submit ourselves to God's perfect will, trusting our lives and circumstances into his hands, we can find great peace and the strength we need to face whatever comes.

How might you pray Your Will Be Done? Why not start with something like this...

Heavenly Father, you know the situation that I'm facing right now. You know my fears and my worries about the future. You know how weak and helpless I feel. And you know Lord, how I would love you to burst into this situation with your mighty power and overwhelm the enemy and bring healing and freedom and wholeness.

But Father, just as the Lord Jesus suffered, he also said that in this world of sin we would face troubles and sufferings ourselves, and that through them you are able to strengthen and purify my faith, and bring about your ultimate purposes. Increase my faith, Father, I pray. Help me to trust you more. Give me the strength to stand up under this time of trial and not to lose hope. Fix my eyes again on the Lord Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith, that like him, and thousands of believers before me, I might stand up under this time of testing. Keep me faithful, Lord, as you are faithful. Calm my fears, and flood my soul with your peace.

In this circumstance, Heavenly Father, may your will, not mine be done. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

OTHER NEWS:

CALLED TO SERVE: last Sunday morning we looked at Romans 12 and the call for all those of us who have been saved by faith in Jesus to “**offer ourselves as living sacrifices.**” As we saw, this means practical service within the church and in the world. That service is to be given humbly, willingly and joyfully - even if it is sacrificial – because it’s how we show our gratitude and thankfulness and love to God for all he has done for us.

Right now, there are many roles vacant; roles which need to be filled so that our churches can flourish and grow. As you look at these lists, please consider prayerfully which of these vacancies you might fill. Don’t wait for others to volunteer for them. If you can do a job and are willing to do it, please get in touch with me or the churchwardens, or those heading these particular ministries. The numbers in square brackets are the number of volunteers needed.

At **St Marys Graveley**, this includes:

- Duty wardens and welcomers, to set up a church, welcome people in and help clear up afterwards. [2]
- People to lead the intercessions and to volunteer to take Bible readings. [lots]
- PCC members [2], and from next April, one person to stand as a church warden.
- Website manager – helping to keep our information up-to-date. [1 or 2]
- And when we are able: tea/coffee/cake providers [4]

At **St Nicholas**, this includes:

- **URGENT NEED:** Church cleaners: hoovering and cleaning the main body of the church once a month. [5+] Contact Steve churchwardens@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk
- **URGENT NEED:** Parish room cleaners: cleaning the kitchen, toilets, Parish rooms and the stairs. [4+] Contact Judy on mrsvicar16@gmail.com or call 01438 213587
- S Club Minis (nursery – Y1) helpers [2], S Club (Y2-Y5) helpers [2] and at least 1 person willing to teach, S Club Max (Y6-Y9) helpers and teachers [2 of each] for our young people in this age group.
- Additional duty wardens and welcomers, to set up a church, welcome people in and help clear up after. [3]
- AV operators – setting up and operating the sound in PowerPoint systems during services. [4-8]
- Website manager – helping to keep our website functioning and online information up-to-date. [1 or 2]
- Singers and musicians. [Many!]
- Social media managers: making sure our benefice has an effective social media presence [1 or 2]
- PCC members- including Deanery Synod representatives. [6]
- And when we are able: tea/coffee/cake providers [8]
- An outreach team- coordinating and leading our door to door and street evangelism. [6]
- Church sitters: so that St Nicholas Church can be open during the week for visitors and those seeking solace and somewhere to pray. [at least 5 pairs]
- Volunteers for the Thursday maintenance team doing jobs in and around the church. [4] See Paul Drakes

The saying that ‘many hands makes light work’ is true at home, and it’s true in the church. If the Lord has saved us from sin and death and hell, then let us show our gratitude to him and offer our bodies (along with our time, talents and resources) as living sacrifices, as our reasonable – **logical** – act of worship. How is God calling you to serve?

OFFICIAL RE-OPENING OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH:

An invitation to come to the official opening on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm, is → but we need people to volunteer to be serve refreshments (speak to Karen Walker) or to act as welcomers/stewards (speak to Steve Bamford).

As part of re-dedicating the building, from Sunday 6th September at 11am to Saturday 12th at 11:00am, in hour slots from 7am to 10pm, we will be reading the whole of the Bible out loud in the church.

So far only 18 of the 86 slots have been filled (see attached). Email Dave to book your slots!

INVITATION TO THE OFFICIAL RE-OPENING OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH STEVENAGE

SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2020.

After 12 months of major refurbishment works, we are delighted that the work is complete and that St Nicholas Church is now open once again. Come along and celebrate with us!

- Church open from 10am to 4pm.
- Display of the work including many fascinating archaeological discoveries.
- Free refreshments being served outside all day.
- Opening ceremony with the Bishop of Hertford, Rt Rev’d Dr Michael Beasley at 12 noon.

For more information contact: enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

THIS COMING SUNDAY, the 9:30am service at St Nicholas will be a Service of the Word whilst the service at St Mary's at 11:30am will include a celebration the Lord's Supper. At both services our readings will be Ezra 5:1-17 and Matthew 10:1-8. This will be the first of 3 weeks on a theme of '**Going out with the Good News!**' Please pray that it will stir all our hearts to love and serve the LORD more through our sharing of the gospel.

If you are yet to book in, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/AxQZu8oT8tPbnnZ9A> If you're not able to make it, do make sure you join us either live on Facebook or catch up later.

3 important notices for those booking to come along

1: Please make sure you only book in ONCE- some people are booking in multiple times which confuses our numbers.

2: If you book to come along, please make sure you do come along! We are close to capacity at both churches now and don't want empty seats or people missing out. Of course, if your circumstances change and you can no longer make it to church, please email us on enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk and let us know.

3: Please arrive early. We like to keep some seats free for visitors- and if you aren't here by the time the service starts your seats may be given away and you may not be able to get in!

PRAY WITH US! There will be no early morning prayer next Tuesday morning, but join us at 7:45pm on Wednesday 9th at St Nicholas for a time of prayer together as we listen to the scriptures being read.

HARVEST: this year our harvest festival celebrations will be on Sunday, 13th September. It will be wonderful to have both churches decorated with fruit and vegetables and flowers as we give thanks to God for his great kindnesses to us. Any food items brought will be donated to the foodshed (St Nicholas) and the Haven (St Mary's). At St Nicholas, if you'd like to make a cash offering instead, all donations will be passed on to our CMS mission partners, Jimmy and Katia rocks in Brazil. Please make sure your gifts are in an envelope marked *Jimmy and Katia Rocks.*

CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN: Very well done to Lauren and Isaac who completed the 66 books of the Bible challenge! I'll accept entries this weekend too if any other children have managed to learn all 66 books off by heart!

FREE TV: St Nicholas has a very large flat screen TV going free. It isn't a smart TV- but before the move it worked well. Speak to Steve or Dave and take it away!

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS: St Nicholas APCM will be after church on Sunday 20th September and St Mary's APCM on the Sunday after, 27th September. Electoral Rolls, which allow people to vote in elections for PCC members, are now open for people to join, and a form (suitable for both churches) is attached for completion and return by the 6th September. Hard copies are available in both churches.

Both churches will need to elect churchwardens for the coming year, deanery synod reps (2 for St Nicks, 1 for St Mary's) and a number of PCC members. Nomination forms will be up in church from this Sunday and we ask that you prayerfully consider whether the LORD is calling you to stand and serve in this capacity.

RENEW CONFERENCE: Each September I usually head to Leeds for the ReNew Conference... but this year, for obvious reasons, it has been moved on line and made free! Details of the conference and a link to a booking form can be found via the following link, <https://www.renewconference.org.uk/annualconference/> and if you are free on the morning of Monday 14th September from 9-1, do sign up.

A further option is to watch it together, socially distanced in front of the various screens, at St Nicholas. That will give us the chance to chat about things outside over coffee breaks and make it more of an event. If you'd be interested in doing that, please sign up using the link above and then let me know.

There will be a short further update on Friday. Until then, may God bless you and your families.

Yours in Christ,

Dave