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**Briefing 102: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.**

Dear friends,

Two weeks ago, we thought a little about the great cloud of witnesses who have walked the path of faith before us, and how the fact that they kept going can and should inspire us. Last week we considered Jesus, who has also walked that road of suffering and shame, and that he did so willingly for the joy set before him. Today I want to focus on a phrase at the end of verse 1: **We are to run the race marked out for us.**

I love reading Christian biographies and hearing accounts of how God has used people to build his kingdom and make disciples. But they can sometimes be rather depressing more than encouraging, particularly if they have been written in a way that suggests that anyone who doesn't live such a 100% sold out, radical, gospel-proclaiming, sinner-saving, miracle-witnessing, mountain-top Christian life is somehow less-than, or even disobedient to their calling. Perhaps you've felt the same. Perhaps you feel the same as you look around the church. Everyone else seems so spiritual, so godly, so wise, so vibrant in their faith... and you feel that you are not quite at that level.

Now of course it may be that our love for the LORD IS lacking; that our fervour for sharing our faith has cooled and that we do need to raise our game somewhat. To make sure that we do not grow weary and lose heart and focus, we will, often, need some honest self-evaluation, followed by repentance and Spirit-empowered change to keep loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. But that's somewhat different to thinking that our Christian life, our service, our experiences need to be the same as those around us, or those in the Christian biographies we read.

So what does Hebrews 12 say? ***"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."***

There is a race marked out for you, one that is suited to your skills and gifts, your temperament and personality, your opportunities. It will involve regular Bible reading and obedience to God's Word because God won't ever ask you to do something that His word says is wrong! It will include regular prayer and public worship and witnessing and service and giving- because those things are vital components of the Christian life, but the how and where, the when and the what and the how much, will be unique to you.

Do you see how freeing that is? You don't have to compare yourself with those around you. You don't have to feel bad because you don't have the same gifts as them. You don't need to sell everything and head off to foreign shores. There's no need to head towards ordination and become a Vicar. All you need to do is seek what the LORD wants YOU to do, how he wants YOU to serve, what he wants YOU to give, where he wants YOU to serve and worship, and then, do that. And keep doing that until He opens new doors and He leads you in new directions.

So wherever God has placed you right now, that's where, for the time being at least, he wants you to live and work and witness for him. The people he's placed around you, those are the ones you are called to love and serve and encourage and witness to. The resources he's given you right now (time, talents, money) those are the ones he wants you to use for his glory. Don't wait for God to give you more resources before you serve him. Don't wait for God to change your personality before you witness. You are to run with perseverance the race God has marked out for you. **YOU**, the person God has made you to be.

It may not be spectacular. No one may ever write a book about you. But God has made you, YOU... and He has set a path before you that He wants you to walk in and persevere in, while always keeping your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

May we all do that, and may God use our lives all for His glory and the building up of His kingdom.

*Dave*

# IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!



Who will you be inviting along? Book your tickers at [www.life22stev.org](http://www.life22stev.org) Hard copy fliers available soon.

The aim of these events is to gently introduce people to the Christian faith, have some fun and promote the main **Passion for Life** events which will take place in Letchworth in the week of 25<sup>th</sup> April. More details on those soon...!

**PRAYER GATHERINGS:** Our next Prayer Gathering is on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February from 7:45pm. This will be in-person only at St Nicholas Church. Our next 7-8am early morning zoom prayer will be on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March. Why not put those dates in your diary now and commit to coming along? The church will also be open for **visitors and private prayer** on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon.

**DEANERY SYNOD:** Everyone is invited to join deanery clergy and reps for Deanery Synod at 7:30pm on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February at St Nicholas Church** where the guest speaker will be David White, the new Diocesan Secretary.

**READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS:** The readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

20<sup>th</sup> February: Matt 22:34-46

27<sup>th</sup> February: Matt 23:1-39

6<sup>th</sup> March: Matt 24:1-51

**LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH.** Our 2-session course looking at the LLF materials will be from **6pm-8pm on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> March.** If you'd like to come, please let me or Martin Bailey know.

**LENT LECTURE: WHY WOMEN MATTER SO MUCH TO GOD.** St Thomas Becket, Northaw at 7:00pm on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022. The speaker is Ros Clarke, a Christian teacher, speaker and writer, and the author of the Lent devotional book *Forty Women: unseen women of the Bible from Eden to Easter*, copies of which will be available to purchase at the lecture. Details are here: [Annual Lecture 2022 | Northaw & Cuffley \(norcuff.com\)](http://AnnualLecture2022|Northaw&Cuffley(norcuff.com))

**HELP NEEDED:** Right now, St Nicholas needs people to join the refreshments rota, more church sitters and people to help with children's and youth work. St Mary's will soon need a new PCC secretary. Could you serve in one of these ways? Speak to Dave or one of the Church wardens for more details.

**LENT 2022.** We're not having a special Lent course this year, but here are 2 ways to make the most of Lent.

**1: Quiet Evening Prayer:** For the 7 Wednesdays of Lent, we are restarting a quiet service of evening prayer in St Nicholas Church. This will run from 7pm to 7:30pm starting on Ash Wednesday with imposition of ashes.

**2: Read and Pray:** A range of books is now available, all priced at £2 each. Why not take one and find someone to read it with, making time each week- in person, on the phone or Zoom - to chat and pray through what you've read?

## NOTES FROM ST NICHOLAS PCC AWAY MORNING.

Thank you to all of you who sent in comments either by email or verbally. They were really useful and helped our discussions enormously. Over the next few weeks, the PCC will be amending our MAP and we'll present it at the APCM on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April. Until then, here are the headlines. If you've more questions, do speak to one of the PCC.

- 1: We reaffirmed our values and worked on a summary statement. Our draft is: **we are a Bible believing, Jesus proclaiming, people-loving community.** Please use the notice board in the parish room for comments/suggestions.
- 2: A greater focus on growing our youth+children's work e.g. aiming for Y+C provision every Sunday, offering subsidies for Christian summer camps, urgently starting a group for Y5+ away from Sundays, planning activities to reach out.
- 3: We need to work at building fellowship and providing 'stepping stones' to faith: for instance, restarting men's and women's groups, snack and chat (etc) and finding other opportunities for hospitality, food and conversation.
- 4: We reviewed our Sunday worship. We are happy with the current style and variety but will be trialling a monthly all-age service and hope to occasionally offer gatherings of a different style on Sunday evenings.