



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 115: Wednesday 18th May, 2022.

Dear friends,

Do you have any meals with family or friends that stick in your memory? Perhaps it was your wedding breakfast, or a leaving party at work. Perhaps it was a special birthday, a meal at which your partner proposed, or a gathering where the conversations were so important that whilst you can't remember what you ate, that occasion has stuck in your memory, so profound were the words you shared together.

Not long after Judy and I got engaged, we were summoned to London for a Sunday lunch by Judy's 3 grown-up children. They wanted to know whether this (then) relatively young man was truly going to take care of their mother and love her and protect her in the way she deserved. I don't remember what we ate, but I remember those open and frank conversations around the lunch table.

In John chapter 21 there is another of Jesus' resurrection appearances, this time by the side of the Sea of Galilee. Fortunately, John was writing the account – and he did remember what they ate, but the most astonishing thing from this beautiful chapter is the conversation that Jesus has with Peter.

This wasn't the first time Peter had seen Jesus since his resurrection. Peter had seen Jesus in the upper room on at least 2 occasions. It was, however, the first time that the subject of Peter's threefold denial of Jesus had been discussed. Perhaps Peter hoped that it had all been brushed under the carpet. He certainly had not forgotten the pain and shame of that evening when he had denied knowing Jesus on 3 separate occasions. But Jesus never glosses over our failings. He brings them front and centre, confronting us with our sinfulness and brokenness that we might be forgiven and restored. And that's what happens here.

On 3 occasions, matching the 3 times Peter denied Jesus, Jesus asks the same, or a very similar, question. **"Peter, do you love me?"** Each question has a different nuance, but the thrust is the same. Peter, do you love me? Do you love me as much as you claim? Do you love me more than your fishing boats and your former life? Do you love me enough to go where I lead you and do what I command you?

And whilst Peter is hurt by the repeated questioning, Jesus is wielding his scalpel with great skill, cutting away the diseased flesh of Peter's denials, betrayals and fear, so that Peter might be truly healed and wonderfully restored. For me, this is one of the most beautiful conversations in all of the Gospels. It shows us the patience of Jesus with his frail, feeble followers. It shows us the kindness of Jesus, who won't let this shame fester in Peter's heart, but wants it dealt with once and for all. And it shows us the love of Jesus for those who are his. As we thought about earlier in the year, Jesus' heart for his people truly is gentle and lowly. He does not snuff out our smouldering wicks of faith or break bruised reeds. He binds up the broken, strengthens the spiritually sick, and by his Spirit he works, by his grace and mercy, to make us whole.

Jesus had so much to teach his disciples over the course of those 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension yet he still made time to restore Peter to full friendship and fellowship with him. And however many times you and I let Jesus down, deny him, ignore him or hide from him, Jesus, the good Shepherd, will continue to seek us out. Let us be ready when he does, to receive his forgiveness, to be strengthened and built up in our faith that, like Peter, we may spend the rest of our days serving our glorious saviour.

Grace and peace,

Dave

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



A chance to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee together!

Why not ask your neighbours and friends to come down to church with you and enjoy the afternoon with you?

If you can help with serving teas, baking scones or supervising the treasure hunt (which will be like the one we did at Easter) please do let us know.

THINKING THROUGH FAITH...

We will start running 2 enquirer's courses over the next few weeks, both in the Lower Parish Room at St Nicholas. **CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED** is a 7-week course examining the life, teaching and works of Jesus through Mark's Gospel. This will be run on Wednesday afternoons at 2pm, starting from 8th June. See Philip or Mike for more details. If that seems too much of a commitment, we are also running a 3-week **HOPE EXPLORED** course starting on Tuesday 7th June at 7:30pm. See Dave or Evelyn for details.

Trailers for the courses can be found here: [\(337\) Christianity Explored Official Guest Trailer - YouTube](#) and here: [\(337\) Hope Explored Trailer - YouTube](#)

Times to Pray...

Wednesdays at 7pm-7:30pm Quiet Evening Prayer: All welcome

Next St Nicholas Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: Wednesday 25th May 7:45-9pm

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom. 7am-8am Tuesday 31st May. Contact Dave for a link

The church will also be open for visitors and private prayer on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm (just 12-12.45pm this week) and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon

Bunyan Baptist Church are holding a Quiet Day at St Nicholas Church this Saturday (21st May) from 10am - 4pm.

Everyone is welcome. Please click on the following link for more details and how to sign up: <https://youtu.be/eV-MxMHq2ZI>

UKRAINE. We're still collecting **TINNED FOOD** (that can be opened without a can opener), cup-a-soup packets and energy bars; **BLANKETS**; or **GOOD QUALITY WINTER CLOTHES**, particularly coats – please do bring them along to church. These will be sent via the Barnabas Fund.

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

22nd May: Psalm 27: 1-14

29th May: Psalm 32: 1-11

5th June: Psalm 72: 1-20

SAFEGUARDING: As part of our commitment to safeguarding, those serving in various roles in the church (eg with children, on our pastoral team or PCCs) need to complete certain training courses, most of which are now on line. If you are informed by one of the safeguarding team that you need to complete such a course, **please do so as soon as practicable!** We shouldn't need regular reminders to do the right thing. Thank you!

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

MEN'S BREAKFAST on Saturday 11th June at 8.30am at the Standing Order, followed by a working party in the Vicarage Garden from 10am.

FLOWER FESTIVAL at St Nicholas Church: Fri 17th June (11am-4pm), Sat 18th (1-4pm), and Sun 19th (1-4pm)

The flower team is now in the final weeks of preparation to bring the St Nicholas Flower Festival together. Can you spare some time over the three days the church is open to the public? There will be sign-up sheets in the church on a small table in the parish room from this Thursday and they would be grateful for any help in the following areas:

Cake baking / Serving refreshments during the open times / Welcoming the public / Opening on the Saturday

They will also need help after the service on Sunday 12th June to move pews and chairs. Thank you in advance for any support you can offer.