

Saint Mary's Newsletter: March

Vicar: David Smithson 027 4213200 Fridays

07 8492761 Afterhours

Lay Minister: Charles Clark 021 02691764

Peoples Warden: Sally-Ann Riddell 022 107562

Vicars Warden: John Heaton 021 702871



SERVICES FOR MARCH

Sunday 3rd:

10am Holy Communion Service – 3rd Sunday of Lent and 90th Celebration

Refreshments: Pot Luck Lunch at the Riddell's

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Trish

Sunday 10th:

10am Holy Communion Service – 4th Sunday of Lent

Refreshments: Majella

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Majella

Sunday 17th:

10am Holy Communion Service – 5th Sunday of LENT

Refreshments: Helen

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Helen

Sunday 24th:

10am Palm Sunday Holy Communion service – 6th Sunday of LENT

Refreshments: Melanie

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Melanie

Sunday 31st:

10am Holy Communion service – EASTER

Refreshments: Easter Eggs!

Readings: Charles

Intercessions:

NOTICE



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St Mary's 90th Celebration: Diary note Sunday 3rd March as it is St Mary's 90th Anniversary. Our special guest celebrant will be Archbishop Sir David Moxon, with the planting of a commemorative Yew tree, followed by a pot luck lunch at Richard & Sally-Ann's home



What does the bible say about Joy?



We know that even the most mature of God's people experience periods of joylessness. For instance, Job wished he had never been born (Job 3:11). David prayed to be taken away to a place where he would not have to deal with reality (Psalm 55:6–8). Elijah, even after defeating 450 prophets of Baal with fire called down from heaven (1 Kings 18:16–46), fled into the desert and asked God to take his life (1 Kings 19:3–5). If these men struggled, how can we experience consistent joy in the Christian life?

The first thing is to realize that joy is a gift from God. The root word for *joy* in the Greek is *chara*, which is closely related with the Greek *charis* for “grace.” Joy is both a gift of God as well as a response to the gifts of God. Joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and relish His favour.

With this in mind, it's evident that one way to experience joy is to focus on God. Rather than dwelling on our difficulties or those things robbing our contentment, we can dwell on God. This is not to say we should deny our discontent or stuff negative emotions. Following the example of many of the psalmists, we can pour out our hearts to God. We can tell Him bluntly all the things that ail us. But then we submit those things to Him, remember who He is, and are happy in Him. Psalms 3, 13, 18, 43, and 103 are good examples.

The book of Philippians has much to say about joy, even though Paul wrote the epistle from prison. Philippians 4:4–8 gives some guidelines for experiencing joy in the Christian life: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! . . . The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Here we see the importance of praising God, remembering that He is near, praying about our worries, and keeping our minds focused on the good things of God. We can experience joy when we intentionally praise. David wrote that the study of God's Word can bring us joy (Psalm 19:8). We experience joy by communing with God through prayer. And we experience joy by keeping our focus on godly things rather than on difficult circumstances or discontentment.

Jesus also gave some instructions regarding joy. In John 15 He talked about abiding in Him and obeying Him. He said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:9–11). One of the keys to joy is living in obedience to God.

Another way to experience joy in the Christian life is through community. God gave Elijah rest and then sent a man, Elisha, to help him (1 Kings 19:19–21). We, too, need friends that we can share our hurts and pains with (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12). Hebrews 10:19–25 says, “Brothers and sisters . . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Because of the grace of God, we know we can approach God confidently in prayer (Hebrews 10:19). We know we are cleansed of our sin (Hebrews 10:22). And we are joined into a new community, a family of believers. With our fellow believers, we hold firm to our faith, trusting in the character of God. We also encourage one another. Christians do not belong to this world (John 17:14–16; Philippians 3:20). We long to be with God, finally restored to our original design. Life can be lonely and discouraging. Others help remind us of truth, carry our burdens with us, and strengthen us to continue on (Galatians 6:10; Colossians 3:12–14).

Joy is meant to be a hallmark of the Christian life. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and a gift of God. We best receive this gift when we focus on the truth of who God is, commune with Him through prayer, and rely on the community of believers He has provided.

Theologian of the Month:

Alister McGrath FRSA (born 1953) is a Northern Irish theologian, Anglican priest, intellectual historian, scientist, Christian apologist, and public intellectual. He currently holds the Andreas Idreos Professorship in Science and Religion in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, and is a fellow of Harris Manchester College at the University of Oxford, and is Professor of Divinity at Gresham College. He was previously Professor of Theology, Ministry, and Education at King's College London and Head of the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture, Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Oxford, and was principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, until 2005.

Aside from being a faculty member at Oxford, McGrath has also taught at Cambridge University and is a Teaching Fellow at Regent College. McGrath holds three doctorates from the University of Oxford: a doctoral degree in molecular biophysics, a Doctor of Divinity degree in theology, and a Doctor of Letters degree in intellectual history.

McGrath is noted for his work in historical theology, systematic theology, and the relationship between science and religion, as well as his writings on apologetics. He is also known for his opposition to New Atheism and antireligion and his advocacy of theological critical realism. Among his best-known books are *The Twilight of Atheism*, *The Dawkins Delusion?*, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life*, and *A Scientific Theology*. He is also the author of a number of popular textbooks on theology.

