

# St John's

## Prayers:

Father, help us to look at people not with judgement or envy but with love and grace. Help us to see others as your beloved children and rejoice in the good in their lives, not measuring them but simply loving them. Amen.

We pray for all who are struggling with life, especially those who suffer from a mental health condition. Among the sick we pray for Lolita Alvira, Scott Bradley, Helen Elliot, Dawn Forey, Ruth Gillespie, Siân Harries, Chris Lark, Hanna Lebrato, Jack Mannix, Marion Mason, Sue Ralfe and Finn.

We remember with thanksgiving, those who have died recently, among them Janet Cousins.

Lord, hear us. Lord graciously hear us.

## Contacts

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The Parish Office is closed.

**Matthew and Jonny say  
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer each day  
Join in [here](#).**

# St John's Church Pew Sheet 20th September 2020

## Welcome!

The Government has allowed places of worship to open for individual prayer and services.

**St John's Church is open for prayer:**  
10.30am-12.30pm each day

**St John's Church is open for services:**  
9.30am Sundays  
10.30am Wednesdays

Our online services will continue for the time being.

**Are you envious  
because I am generous?**

**Matthew 20:15b**

## **ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT**

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

**[www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk)**

Please do check our website for future updates

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## The Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity

### **Collect**

Lord God, defend your Church from all false teaching and give to your people knowledge of your truth, that we may enjoy eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Bible Readings** (click on links to access passages):

[Jonah 3:10-4:1-11](#)

[Philippians 1:21-30](#)

[Matthew 20:1-16](#)

### **Short Sermon from Becky Stone**

"It's not fair!" The cry of every child...ever. My parents usually responded with the old adage, "life isn't", which was no comfort at all! But maybe they had a point?

I imagine you and I have a similar idea of fairness: everyone being treated equally, rewarded according to their effort, pro-rata-ed to account for length of service, hours of diligence etc. We feel unfairness keenly, from the shared school project you know you worked harder on than your partner, to the man being paid more than a woman for doing the same job. We look at what others have and compare: do they have more than us? Not fair! Do they appear to have things they haven't earned or deserved? Not fair! Have they seen, or done, or experienced that thing we always wished to but haven't? Not fair!

Many such judgments are based on our objective measures of 'fairness', but they also have close links to envy. However, when we look at today's Bible readings, we see that God has a very different sense of fairness. His concern is not for the pro-rata, balanced measurements we are so fond of. His concern is his love of the individual.

Jonah is perfectly clear that, humanly speaking, it is not fair that the people of Nineveh should be forgiven. He is thoroughly put out that God has not punished them! God seeks to teach him a lesson about his ungenerous response by first providing a bush for shade, and then withdrawing it. The critical thing about the bush is that it was not grown and tended by Jonah: he did not love the bush, he merely enjoyed what it gave him. God wants Jonah to understand that God's

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interest in the people of Nineveh is not about what they do, how they behave, or what they contribute to his world. It is simply that they are people he loves and cares for!

Similarly in the vineyard the owner shows that the individuals who work in the vineyard are not commodities to him. He does not measure them by how much they contribute to his vineyard, but by the fact of their being there. His repeated visits to the town square demonstrate his concern that none should miss out on the opportunity, not even those that everyone else has ignored or avoided all day. It is his love for the individual which is on display.

Both stories remind us that fairness is not at the heart of the Gospel. Grace is. Generous, abundant, overflowing grace, which gives regardless of what is earned or deserved, which forgives, and cares, and loves, asking only for a response, not measuring its length or comparing it to anyone else's. Today's lesson is not about mending the unfairness and injustice which greed has created in our world, as important as that may be! It is about shifting our perspective away from judging a person's worth or what they deserve based on things or actions, away from judgements linked to envy. Instead, making it our aim simply to love people as God's creation and for that reason alone to judge them 'worthy' of whatever good fortune may have come their way, and crucially also worthy of mercy, of love, and of a welcome in the Kingdom.

So next time you find yourself thinking, "it's not fair", "they don't deserve that", just stop for a moment and ask yourself: does it need to be fair? Or could it just be an expression of love? Could grace count for more here than a careful weighing of justice? Can I let go of resentment and simply rejoice in their good?

If we all looked around and judged what others have not in a spirit of fairness, but in a spirit of love, I wonder how different some of our feelings about others might be? I wonder how different some of our politics might be? I wonder how different our message might appear to those on the outside looking in? God loves us not for what we do, but just because we are; not out of fairness but out of grace. And he asks us to show the same love, and grace, to others. Amen.