

From The Rectory

As I write this letter, I have been enjoying the cold crisp January days – it is lovely to get out and have a walk and then come back in, draw the curtains and light the fire.

We are so blessed to live in a country where even in these days of global warming, the seasons are distinguishable and each has their own special characteristics.

In church we have been watching the enjoying the seasons too. The Christmas season with all its joy and wonder passed into Epiphany, and now with February we begin the countdown to Lent as we mark the four Sundays before Lent (fourth before Lent, third before Lent etc.), and start to consider how we might approach Lent this year.

And so the church seasons too have their own distinctive characteristics. Just as nature's seasons mean different physical activities and pleasures, so the church seasons invite us to partake of different spiritual activities and pleasures.

For most of February our Sunday Gospel readings are taken from the Sermon on the Mount. This found in three of chapters of Matthew's Gospel, where the author of the gospel has grouped together most of Jesus' direct teaching. There are no parables or healings – just Jesus talking about how we should be living our lives and the values we should have. This teaching is set on a mountain, so that we see the connection between Jesus and Moses – the Ten Commandments were given on a mountain, and here, with the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' 'update' on it, Jesus' code for living.

These three chapters are my favourite bits of Matthew's Gospel, and if only I could follow their advice at all times in my life, I would be a better, kinder person, a better citizen not only of Christ's kingdom, but of the world. They are always worth revisiting, and taking stock of how one is measuring up. It is a useful preparation for the coming Lenten season of self-reflection.

We only do extracts in church, but it is worth all of us sitting down and reading the whole three chapters. Whether or not we are committed Christians, they contain very good advice and provide us with a 'rule of life' through which we can all help to make our world, with all its imperfections, a better place.

Matthew chapters 5-7 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+5>)

Happy reading!

With love and prayer

Jennifer