



Highway



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Free

<http://parishofmerthyrydfil.com>

<https://christchurchmerthyrydfil.com>

<http://parishofdowlais.com/>

Dear Friends

The Ven John Barton considers....

How not to be a Grumpy Old Man (or Woman)

Marvel. Marvel every time you see a child learning to walk and speak at the same time. Share in their delight. Wonder at the dawn of each new season: sunshine and shadows, falling leaves, frost, sudden new growth. You are still alive to take it all in. That's an unexpected bonus.

Appreciate. Have a look around your living room and concentrate on items designed for your comfort and entertainment, which your forbears never had. Think of someone you don't like; now ponder a couple of their good points. Try to desire their welfare more than their downfall.

Forgive. (That's a condition for being forgiven). You may have to do it over and over again for the same person. Unearth grudges which have been lying under the surface. Are they worth preserving that much? Think of the damage they are doing you.

Married or Single? Don't envy. The grass on the other side of the street isn't greener, it's just different. Count your blessings - some will be uniquely yours. Be concerned for the welfare of someone whose circumstances are unlike yours.

Deal with disappointment. If you have become grumpy it's probably caused by a deep-down dissatisfaction with yourself. Stop raking over past failures. Each morning when you wake up, say with the Psalmist, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Change. No, it isn't too late. It will only be too late to change when you are in a coffin. In the meantime, there's still room for manoeuvre. Remember John Henry Newman's words, "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."



BELLRINGERS AT CHURCHES UNLOCKED

On Saturday 3rd June St Tydfils began their Churches Unlocked week, the bell ringers held a tower open day. Firstly to call people into the church and secondly in the hope to possibly gain some new recruits.

We borrowed the Llandaff and Monmouth publicity boards and CCTV equipment. The boards having information about ringing with pictures to give people and understanding of what goes on in a belfry, and the further ringing community. We had CCTV in the tower to enable people who were unable to climb the tower stairs to see what we actually do in the ringing chamber and also what happens amongst the bells.

We also welcomed people into the belfry to observe what we do, many people think bells ringing to be a recording or just pulling on a rope. As our visitors saw there is a technique to ringing and it's not that simple! We also allowed visitors to feel how to chime a service bell and an assisted attempt of ringing the backstroke of a bell that was in the up position as we ring.

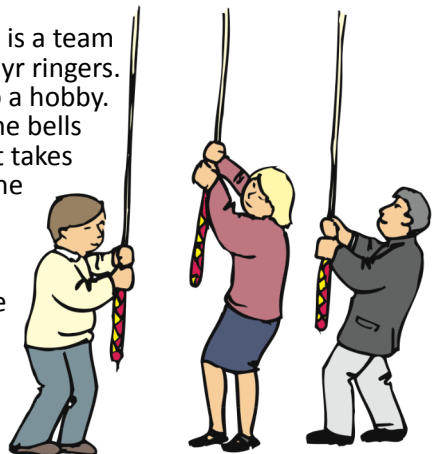
I would really like to take this opportunity to thank all those Merthyr ringers who helped. Just want to say a big thank you to all who were involved in the tower open day at St Tydfils for "Churches Unlocked" Lisa, Jeff, Mike & Dave who put in many hours on Friday cleaning the tower and setting up the CCTV equipment. Lisa, Marina, Rebecca, Dave, Andrew, Len, Neil & Jeff who were all there for ringing demonstration and manning the laptop downstairs. A big shout out to our little supporters who were so well behaved for such a long day for them, Azura, Bradley & Ezmae. Also to the wardens who provided us all lunch and a cuppa.

The good news is that Vlasta, one of the visitors who came up to the belfry and had a go on the day has started coming to practices to learn.

For those of you who saw on the day, ringing is a team effort, and we need to build a team of Merthyr ringers. Bellringing is a service to the church and also a hobby. We are on the lookout for learners to keep the bells ringing for services, sadly numbers are low. It takes time to learn to handle a bell and ring with the team and its not everyone's cup of tea, but unless you try you'll never know!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are interested

Yvonne John 07779925015



Remembering the genius of JRR Tolkien

Fifty years ago, on 2nd September 1973, JRR Tolkien, the fantasy writer, poet, scholar and educator, died. He was best known for his novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Born in Bloemfontein and descended from a family that originated in an area that was then East Prussian and is now Russian, Tolkien – always known as Ronald – thought of himself as unmistakably English. He was brought up in the Birmingham area after the death of his father, who had stayed in South Africa while his wife and children visited England.

Ronald's mother then died when he was 12, and he was raised by aunts, uncles and a guardian who was a Roman Catholic priest, Father Francis. Tolkien later became a devoted Catholic and insisted that his fiancée, Edith Bratt, join him in that faith. She did so, reluctantly, and they had a long and extremely happy marriage. His beliefs were a significant factor in C S Lewis's conversion to Christianity.

Tolkien had a longstanding fascination with language and became an acknowledged expert in both linguistics and mythology, which led to his writing his two most famous works – and several others. Despite assumptions by some, none were intended as children's books, and *The Lord of the Rings* was never a trilogy – it was printed in three volumes for cost reasons.

The huge success of his writing led to unexpected fame. He and his wife eventually moved to Bournemouth and lived there until she died in 1971. He was then given rooms in Merton College, Oxford. He said in an interview shortly before his death: "A pen is to me as a beak is to a hen."

Tim Lenton

Scraps of Glass

The story is told of a man in charge of building a great church, who was pestered by an apprentice who wanted to design the glass for one of the windows. Finally, he agreed that the apprentice should be given one very small window. BUT – the apprentice would have to provide all the materials himself.

Undaunted, the apprentice carefully swept up all the stray bits of coloured glass that had been discarded and set to work. Slowly, and with great care, he pieced together a window of rare beauty. When the church was finally opened, many people stopped to stare in wonder at his small, but so beautiful, iridescent window.

Our lives can be like that – no matter how small we may feel, or that we have only scraps to offer to God, He can still help us use every bit of time and energy and love we do have, to build a life that is beautiful, and which will reflect the glory of God to others.

The Divine Gardener

This is the time of year for many churches to hold their Harvest Festival services. No doubt, there will be displays of food, some grown in local gardens. While gardeners have pleasure growing fruit and vegetables, it can be hard work tending to them.

Jesus knew about the care given to vines. In John 15:1-8 Jesus compared Himself to a vine and referred to God as the gardener. In this parable, God is responsible for pruning the vine. He sees what parts are useful, and what parts useless. The unproductive parts are cut away, so that growth is encouraged. Jesus is telling us that God will prune our lives, not to harm us, but to encourage our spiritual growth.

God's pruning cuts away wrong attitudes and wasteful behaviour, all of which serve no useful purpose in our lives. This pruning is required so that we become more fruitful. And the fruit God wants is love, joy, patience etc. (see Galatians 5:22-23) These holy qualities are intended to influence the world to change it from the bad to all that is good.

To encourage its growth, a vine has regularly to be cut back. The effect looks drastic, but it is still essential. When God cuts away the dead wood in our lives, He does it because He knows how our lives can grow. The pruning knives are in the hands of our Father God who only desires the best for us. This pruning process can be painful, but Jesus says that it is vital if the Holy Spirit is to flow through us to produce the fruit that God wants.

Also in this parable, Jesus said He was the Vine, and we are the branches. We have no existence apart from Jesus. We can do nothing for God on our own and must be joined to Jesus. In the same way a vine utilises the life-giving sap to flow into the branches, so we need the Holy Spirit to flow His life into us. It is only by us remaining in Jesus, that He can give us the inner resources for an effective fruit-producing life.

Jesus said, 'Abide in Me' (John 15:4 King James Version). Abiding speaks of sustenance, being upheld and supported, enduring and withstanding. So, if we are to reap a harvest of holiness, may we be prepared for God's pruning, and continue to abide in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Lester Amman





Blessing of



Animals Service



St Tydfil's Church
Sunday 1st October at 3.00pm
Bring your pet along for a blessing &
join us for refreshments after the service
Everyone welcome



ST DAVID'S CHURCH

Prosecco Afternoon Tea

Join us for a Prosecco Afternoon
Tea in aid of St David's Church
Restoration Fund

Saturday 16th September 2023
2pm till 5pm

Merthyr Tydfil Golf Club
(Cilsanwys) Cefn Coed CF48 2NT

Raffle with great prizes
£15.00 per person

Everyone welcome!

At the heart of Merthyr Tydfil since 1847

THE MINISTRY AREA
TWMPATH!
AKA
BARN
DANCE



28TH OCTOBER
Location TBC

What's on in Christchurch and All Saints

It was a pleasure to run some workshops for the Dowlais Community Centre Summer Camp on the theme of 'Kindness'. We finished off by making some 'Be Cool, Be Kind' bunting!



Our Table Top Sale was a happy social occasion on a rainy day, lots of tea, coffee and chat. And we raised money too.



Many thanks to Huw Williams for the guided tour of Pant Cemetery—he's a fount of information.

Coming up next...

Parish Pilgrimage

Sunday September 3rd - After lunch at Blanco's Hotel, we'll be visiting Margam Abbey for a guided tour of the Abbey and the Stones Museum, followed by a Pilgrim Evensong at St Illtyd's, a beautiful ancient church on the banks of the Neath Canal. Coach: £10 - Lunch: £18

Mother's Union Meeting - Celebrating the Holy Cross

Tuesday 5th September at 2.30pm in Christchurch - all very welcome.

Mother's Union Diocesan Thanksgiving Service

at Llandaff Cathedral on Thursday 7th September at 2pm.
We'll be taking cars down if anyone would like to join us.

The Weddings through the Decades Exhibition at Christchurch has been postponed until October.

A Service of Celebration of Music and the life of Derry Prothero

with Cantorion Cyfarthfa and St David's Church Choir.
During the service a plaque will be dedicated to Derry's memory.
Thursday September 14th at 7pm at St David's Church.

Harvest Thanksgiving - following our Thanksgiving services we will hold a Harvest Supper on Sunday 1st October at 5pm at All Saints. Tickets £5.
At the services, food will be collected for Merthyr Cynon Foodbank.

The Inspired Word of God

People often speak of the Bible as being the Inspired Word of God, but what does that actually mean? The way we understand this will have a huge effect on the way we read scripture, on how much emphasis we place of different parts, it will effect what we take from it, and whether we see it all working together to paint a picture of God or whether we see a book in tension, pulling against itself, contradicting itself, and filled with errors. Indeed, it seems so many of the controversial issues in the church today find their roots in this fundamental question. What does it mean for the Bible to be the inspired Word of God?

2 Timothy 3:16 says
“All scripture is God-breathed, profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”.

Some translations render this as “All Scripture is inspired by God’ but we lose something of its meaning in that translation. The word used is θεόπνευστος constructed from two Greek words θεός [Theos] which means God, and πνέω [Pnew] breathe. When we say Scripture is the Word of God, we are saying that it is breathed out by him. We are saying it is God’s very voice which we are reading, speaking to us through the pages of Scripture.

But how does God’s voice come to land on the pages? Now I am sure there will be some hermit living in some far off mountain somewhere in the world who believes that the Scripture miraculously appeared and that human authors played no part in it. The problem is, this doesn't really fit with what the Scripture says about itself.

It says in 2 Peter 1:20-21;
“you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.

So it was humans that wrote Scripture (I don't think any of us will be surprised there), but they did so while being carried along by the Holy Spirit. This is of course why we often refer to Scripture as the inspired Word of God. His Word is delivered to us through people who are carried along by His Holy Spirit.

But how? How does the Holy Spirit lead people to write what God wanted written?

There are two directions we can take from here. First is the idea that the Holy Spirit used people like puppets, placing them in some form of trance, making them write exactly what the Spirit directed, word for word. Which would make it perfectly God’s word, with no trace of human contamination, bias, or mistakes. However, it is hard to defend this view. Firstly, the books of the Bible are penned by many different authors, with each of the authors’ own personalities perceivable through their writing style. For example, Mark is very abrupt in his writing, Luke is meticulous and logical, John writes with great feeling, Paul with well nuanced arguments. This means that every book of the Bible has at least a bit of the human author in them. Secondly, we see some instances such as in 1 Corinthians 7:12 where the author qualifies a statement by making clear that it is only an opinion being shared and not a directive from God. These

issues do create problems in understanding the Bible as being inspired in this way. Clearly the Holy Spirit worked in a way that gave the authors SOME 'artistic' license.

The other direction we can take is that the Spirit led the authors in the same way many Christians experience God's guidance today. God laid on their hearts what he wanted them to write and they wrote it, a sort of prompting or urging from the Spirit. This would certainly explain why we see the people behind the texts and it fits with the way we do so often see God working through his people throughout the bible and even today.

However, if this is the extent of what it means for the Scripture to be the inspired Word of God then it would mean that at most the general sentiment of what is written is what God wanted, BUT the nuances and deviations are not. God simply accepted the limitations of using fallen people and gave us something that was acceptable as his word, but not wholly His Word. This understanding would mean that we should accept that there are plenty of errors within the Bible and we ought to be very careful paying too close attention to the nuances within the biblical text. It would also mean that some parts of the Scripture are more God's Word than others. For example, when we have a clear statement saying 'God says....' then, we are encountering in a very direct sense the Word of God and those statements must hold absolute authority over us. On the other hand, passages like 1 Corinthians 7:12 cannot for a moment be considered as being the Word of God and thus should hold absolutely no authority over us. There becomes a spectrum within Scripture between what is God's Word and what isn't

His Word and every verse falls somewhere along that spectrum, with each verse having varying authority accordingly.

This is an approach which seems to be favoured by many in the church today. However, not only does it mean that 2 Timothy 3:16 is wrong and should instead read "some of scripture is God-breathed", it also neglects one very important aspect of God's nature. An aspect which is emphasised throughout the Scripture*¹ and an emphasis upheld by key theologians through history from Augustine to Calvin, to the great Welsh preacher Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones. God is sovereign! If we reject this basic truth about God then we can not claim to believe in the God of the Scriptures, nor the God of the historic Christian faith.

If we believe in a God who is truly sovereign, who created all that is, who sustains all things, and who is working throughout history to bring about his purposes, then we need to accept that he was more than capable of being sovereign over the creation of His Word, and that he is more than capable of making it exactly what he wanted it to be. Not by treating the authors as puppets OR purely giving them a gentle prodding to write something along the lines of what he wanted written. BUT by working in the lives of the authors before they were even born, to make them exactly who he wanted them to be, shaping their lives, their experiences, their learning, and even the people around them, so that when they picked up their reeds/quills to write, prompted by His Spirit, they wrote exactly what God wanted written.*² With their consciousness entirely intact, they used their own words, reasoning, and academic abilities, with all their God

shaped passions, and bias', their impatience, and their joys, to write what God laid on their hearts to write. Not forcing God to just accept or deal with their human limitation, but with God doing what he is always doing, working through broken and fallen people to perfectly achieve his purposes.

It wasn't a job half done, filled with errors, but a Scripture that is perfectly what God intended it to be, making it truly God's Word. Every part his Word and every part shaped by him working in his sovereign power to make it exactly what he wanted. This is why 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says; "when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is the Word of God".

As Christians we believe in a sovereign God, who is able to achieve his purposes perfectly. No human limitations, no human resistance, no powers of darkness, can stand in the way of God doing what he is determined to do!

So believing in this God, what does it mean for Scripture?

- 1) It would make it entirely God's Word (which it claims to be) with every part having its origin from God, being inspired, breathed, shaped by him.
- 2) It would make every part authoritative. If it is from God, then we must sit up and pay attention to it, allowing it to speak into and inform our lives and our understanding.
- 3) It must also make it inerrant, since it is from a God who is capable of perfectly achieving his purposes, and a God who is without spot or blemish, how can we

suggest the words breathed out by him might be otherwise!

4) It also means that all of Scripture must be held together, wrestled with as a whole as we seek to understand it, because it is all from God, with his single unified mind behind it all. Yes penned quilled by many broken fallen people, but a people shaped by a sovereign God, who made them exactly who he wanted them to be, to write what he ordained them to write.

So I leave you with Jesus's words from Matthew 4:4;

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on EVERY Word that comes from the mouth of God"

Let us turn ourselves to God's Word, to be fed by it and allow it to reshape our lives.

Footnotes

*1 Job in 42:2 says about God "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted" or Proverbs 16:4 ""The LORD works out everything to its proper end" or Psalm 135:6 "The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths"

*2 God at work in people: Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 1:11-12 Psalm 139:13-16, Isaiah 64:8, Romans 8:29. Then God preparing the groundwork before time such as in Joseph in Genesis 45:8, or Moses in Exodus 2. There are many other examples we could point to.

Marc-Ashton

St TYDFIL'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist & Kids Church

St DAVID'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

Ss PETER & PAUL'S CHURCH, Abercanaid

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

CHRIST CHURCH, Georgetown, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, Dowlais

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

CHRISTCHURCH, Pant

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

ONLINE

SUNDAY 11.00am Dowlais & Pant Facebook and YouTube Service

St JOHN'S Troedryhiw

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Communion

St MARY'S, Merthyr Vale

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY 10.15am Holy Communion

All services may be changed or added to especially on Saints' Days.

Please see the Ministry Area website for details

<https://www.merthyrtydfilministryarea.co.uk>

St John's Troedryhiw Notices

Knit & Natter group at 2pm every Thursday

**Harvest Festival Sunday 1st October
followed by a harvest lunch**

MINISTRY AREA OFFICE

01685 388805

(10.00–13.00, Mon, Tue & Thur)

The office e mail address is:- lyndaattheoffice@btinternet.com

The readings for next Sunday and various church news sheets can be seen and downloaded from the Publications page of the Ministry Area website at <https://www.merthytydfilministryarea.co.uk/publications>



QR Code for the
Ministry Area Website

Next issue

Please let me have anything for October 2023
by Sunday 24 September 2023. Preferably earlier.

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Please e-mail your articles to
kenlewis.merthytydfil.church@gmail.com

All named articles are the work of that person. Publication does not imply agreement with the opinions expressed. Ken Lewis, Editor.