

This Week at St Mary's

28 November 2021

'THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL'

Recently, for Owen Patterson, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Tim Paine, the writing had indeed proved to be on the wall. It's the Press which usually does the writing, predicting a 'bad outcome'. In the story about King Belshazzar in Babylon (Daniel 5), a mysterious hand wrote on the wall during an orgy, draining the king, well, regent's, face of blood.

We all enjoy a good story, and the book of Daniel has a number. At one level, that's what they are - good stories. For millennia they have been more than that, giving vital hope to people suffering under tyrannies, assuring them 'the writing is on the wall' for the regime. Like Belshazzar, each will be found to have been 'weighed, numbered and found wanting' - by God. The Japanese recognised the power of these stories, banning the reading of the book of Daniel and Revelation in their occupied territories during WW2.

It is striking how Belshazzar turns to a wise Jew at his moment of crisis. No one else had been of help. It's common for people to see God as the last resort when things are tough. Better that than never. The story is clear - 'the help you need will come from a wise Jew'. Christians are convinced that 'wise Jew' will be Jesus Christ, the Saviour, wisdom personified.

The story ends with Belshazzar's death, that very night. Herodotus and Xenophon, Greek historians, recount how Cyrus captured the palace on 11th October 539 BCE. It doesn't sound as though Belshazzar had time to take responsibility for his pride and his actions. Another Son of the King, however, most certainly chose to assume total responsibility for all human exaltation, individual and communal. He was willing to die on the cross to face the writing which is on the wall for each of us, and redeem it to give a sure hope for all to be free from oppression.

Tom Gillman

MODERN SLAVERY IN NOTTINGHAM

The Rights Lab, Nottingham University's research unit into modern slavery and exploitation organised an evening at Cornerstone church for church leaders and members, as well as those involved with compassion ministries. 'Hidden in Plain Sight in our Communities' remains all too accurate.

D. I. Nikki Smith reported that between July and September, there were 17 cases of modern slavery before her department. 4 concerned minors, with an additional 2 involving county lines. Statistics show that 75% of female victims are from Romania, the majority from rural areas, to be coerced into sexual exploitation. Cannabis growers use labour (often minors) from Albania and Vietnam and Chinese nail bars. Gang masters are commonly from the Western Balkans.

Vulnerability is preyed upon - mercilessly. The shocking Charlie's video was shown [The Clewer Initiative | Charlie's story](#) homeless from the age of 14, he became addicted to alcohol and was approached by a man who promised him a steady income, drink and a safe place to stay. When Charlie went with him he discovered that all of those promises were lies. The asylum system, leaving people with no support and unable to work provides an all too ready context for exploitation. Those with learning difficulties or autism are targeted.

An important opportunity to be reminded that EACH of us can make a difference. Victims easily blend into the city scape, some would not even say they are in slavery. Tell-tale signs may be physical appearance, or accommodation (caravan in a garden) or a van/minibus transporting to work. The Clewer Institute website goes fully into what each of us can do. The Salvation Army holds the Home Office contract to support victims at all levels of recovery. Open eyes and ears at Food Banks, Homeless shelters, and the Refugee Forum provide potential points of contact, the more of us who can be hands on so involved, the better.

LAST WEEK AT ST MARY'S

CONGRATULATIONS BEN STANIFORTH - for winning the 2021 Nottingham Young Musician of the Year Competition. Brilliant.

CONCERT BY THE BACH CHOIR Saturday 20th, the first for 2 years and much appreciated by the audience.

SUNDAY CLUB (children's group) met and produced wonderful cloaks inspired by the story of Joseph. Huge thanks to Beth and others.

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE 12th December 10.45am. Invite friends to this popular pre-Christmas service, with Christingle orange etc.

ST MARY'S CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL will run from 5 December. A big thankyou to all supporters, in aid of the Emmanuel House Christmas Appeal.

ST MARY'S BOOK GROUP will meet on Thursday 2 December in the church at 11 am to discuss Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Everyone welcome.

GIVING TO ST MARY'S - with our year end approaching, we are looking at a **DEFICIT** of approx **£53,000** - not surprising in this Covid era. Please would you consider making us a donation and/or entering a regular financial commitment? Either use online banking (NatWest 56-00-61, St Mary's PCC a/c 00834602) alternatively standing order forms are by the south porch, cash or cheque in the donations chest, or use the Donate button on the website. Please use Gift Aid if you are a UK tax-payer.

FROM MEADOWS FOODBANK - please choose us as your local cause on the Co-op Members' website. Log in & select Meadows Foodbank on 'your local causes'. Currently needed - **UHT milk; 500g bags sugar; toilet rolls; small bottles cooking oil; tinned meat, fruit, potatoes; shampoo; shower gel; toothpaste; or cash donations.** Tues 5.30-7.15, Fri 10-12, Sat 11-1pm NG2 2JD

**Wherever you are, we extend a very warm greeting to you,
especially if you've recently discovered St Mary's**

**10.45am SUNDAY SERVICE in St Mary's Church
also Audio Broadcast live via our website
(follow the link, including for Order of Service)**

6.30pm ADVENT PROCESSION (Live & Broadcast)

6.15pm WEDNESDAY EVENSONG

**6pm THURSDAY EVENING PRAYER (skype) Contact Grant
(gwalton@stmarynotts.org)**

**ST MARY'S IS OPEN
Monday-Friday 11.00-2.30**

PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR

Estelle Barks Stephen Morris Harry Palmer Kirsten Solway

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