

2 Corinthians 13v11-13 Matthew 28v16-20 St Mary's Morning Service Sunday
31 May 2026

Having lived all my life in North London and supported Tottenham Hotspur since I was 6 years old I heartily congratulate Arsenal on their achievement of winning the football Premier League and?).

As you know there is no 11am service at St Mary's today because of the Arsenal parade. It being the 5th Sunday of the month a Healing Service was originally scheduled for 11am for which I was thinking of an appropriate sermon. Having started on that track the theme of my sermon this morning is one of Healing and Wholeness. By wholeness I mean a well-being and a flourishing of us as individuals.

I know many people are dubious when they hear of claims of healing. If that is your situation, you are in good company. In our gospel reading from the end of Matthew, we read that Jesus' disciples worshipped him when he appeared in his resurrection body, but some doubted; some doubted. We too are cautious to believe claims of healing. Are we being conned? Are we being manipulated? Is the person seemingly responsible for the healing on a massive ego trip?

I believe that God does sometimes heal in quite miraculous ways, but that the healing is entirely in God's hands. It takes place at God's timing and is intimately tied up in his relationship with each person as an individual. God is trying to reveal something of himself through this experience.

I do believe. I believe because my knee was healed when I opened myself to God. I gave up on all my defences and acknowledged what was going on in my life, as somebody prayed for me after a church service. The prayer was not about my knee, it was something else that I had to deal with in my place of work but I realised the next day that my knee, which was very painful just in walking was totally healed and I could run and jump freely. Not always, but sometimes healing involves repentance and there was a strong element of that in my case.

A seemingly mundane phrase of four words is the focus of my talk this morning. "Put things in order." We find this in 2 Corinthians 13 verse 11. It is the beginning of an instruction St Paul gives to his friends in the church at

Corinth. Put things in order. It may sound as if we are cleaning up the kitchen after cooking or tidying the papers on our desk. However what I learned from a commentary on 2 Corinthians, is that the verb used in that mundane command “Put things in order”, is the same verb that was used in Mark 1 verse 19 when Jesus first met James and John by the Sea of Galilee as they were mending their nets. I don’t suppose many of us here today have ever mended fishing nets but you can probably imagine it, if you have ever tried to untangle string that has been tied up into an uneven ball or tried to sort out a load of electric cables from a number of electronic devices. Broken fishing nets will also have holes in them as well as being totally tangled up.

Paul is telling the Corinthians to mend their lives, to undo the tangles and to repair the breakages in our lives. These things could be the failure to listen and to follow the other instructions that Paul gives in verse 11. We don’t agree with one another. Clearly there will be things on which we don’t agree whether in church, at work, amongst friends or above all in our families. The test of how we live with the disagreement is found in Paul’s next encouragement to live in peace. Disagreement does not have to disturb the peace in our lives or with others but so often it does.

Untangling the mess in our lives can involve dealing with something that has been gnawing away at us for years, but we have never got round to facing up to it. That was certainly the case in my life when somebody’s prayer enabled me to tackle the issue that had been troubling me for three or four years and resulted not only in my knee being healed but also my being given a deep sense of God’s Love for me.

Putting things in order, mending the nets of our lives can involve many other things that God in his great grace and mercy will show to us if we are open and vulnerable to him. There may be something that we do in our lives that we don’t like that we repeat time and time again even though we wish we did not. It is some kind of compulsion. It could be something self-destructive. It could be a very good thing that dominates our lives and we cannot keep it in perspective. It could be a resistance to saying sorry to somebody we have hurt. It could be hanging on to resentment.

In all the issues I have mentioned this morning it can often seem impossible for us to change our ways, to mend our nets and to put our lives in order in a way that pleases God and enables us to live a life of joy and peace. There is abundant support on offer from God. We glimpse it in the last verse of 2 Corinthians 13, a verse that will be a familiar to many of us. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion (we may know it better as fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Incidentally this verse is a harbinger of the Christian understanding of God as Three in One and One in Three, an understanding that we celebrate in the Church today as Trinity Sunday. As we finish let us focus on God's offer.

The grace of the Lord Jesus is available at all times and places. Take to heart Jesus' last words in Matthew's gospel, "And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age." The grace of Jesus is the undeserved mercy that we all need. That grace was demonstrated by Jesus dying on the Cross for each one of us. On the Cross Jesus took all our sins, all our compulsions, all our burdens that we might know the forgiveness of sin and the freedom to enjoy an intimate relationship with God.

We can cooperate with God by wilfully not doing things we know in our hearts are not right and not good for us, but so often we need the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus to overcome our compulsive actions, enable us to let go of resentment against another and to find love and patience for another when naturally we could never do it.

This great last verse of 2 Corinthians also speaks of the love of God. The love of God is so much more than a religious concept that we believe with our minds. There is such joy and freedom in knowing and trusting that God loves us, even you and even me. That Love of God came to me in a very profound and intense way after the prayer I mentioned. Today, for me, that Love persists as an assurance and sense of being there. It is helped by daily reading of the Bible. For example today I read from the Church of England Daily Prayer Psalm 86 which contains this in verse 13, "For great is your steadfast love towards me; you have delivered me from the grave." Sometimes the words leap out from the page. Sometimes meditating on a phrase creates personal meaning.

Finally, the communion or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is what brings our relationship with God to be something that is real and tangible in our daily life, not just something that we say we believe. Through the Holy Spirit we learn to hear God's voice and recognise his ways as we go about our daily lives.

The converted slave trader John Newton penned the following verse in his famous hymn "Amazing Grace", "Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come, 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home."

May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit bring a life that is real and full of hope and joy as we seek to follow Jesus day by day.