

June 28th 2026

St. Peter and St Paul

**8.00am Holy Communion at All Saints Oakham and
10.30am Holy Communion at Langham**

*Genesis 24.34-38, 42-49, 58-e; Romans 7.15-25a; Matthew
11.16-19, 25-e*

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Over the last few weeks, we have been reading about Abraham and his family, and it has been something of a grim tale, with family squabbles, cynicism and vindictiveness. This came to a head last week in the reading that we missed because there was a lot else on, about Abraham taking Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him at God's command, before finding a conveniently placed sheep. And in the light of all that, today's reading comes as something of a relief. It is a gentle story of the finding of a wife for Isaac, of Abraham's servant praying for guidance and being led to Rebekah, of Rebekah agreeing to go to Isaac, and of their eventual love for each other. Nothing nasty, nothing vindictive or vicious. But things will change, and next week we come onto the story of Esau and Jacob, Isaac and Rebekah's two children. Esau the elder, who sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, and Jacob, with Rebekah's connivance, stealing the blessing from his dying father meant for the first born. And that is followed by Jacob running away from his brother's fury. In terms of what this reading is saying to us, perhaps it shows that God is in control in some way of the normal, routine things of life, and we see the servant simply praying that God will lead him to the right person. No big deal, no dramatic visions. However, in literary terms, and the story of the patriarchs is very much a literary construct, today's story is carefully placed as an interlude between two sets of events, a respite, a rest. a time to take stock, before the next highly charged episode.

And I think we see something similar in our other readings too, even though they are not specifically related to each other. In Romans, Paul has been outlining the basics of his theology, and in our readings this argument almost rises to fever pitch – he knows what he should do, how he should behave, but he is trapped, he cannot become as he should be. How is he going to get out of this, how is he going to turn his life around,

Who will rescue me from this body of death?

And he almost shouts the answer

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Faith in what Jesus has done for him on the cross is the way forward, and in this he seems to find some sort of resolution. And the turmoil of chapter 7, leads into the peace and hope of chapter 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And finally to his great hymn of confidence in God's power.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So our reading today, is something of an interlude, bringing Paul to a conclusion and a resolution, finding his rest in Jesus.

Then today's gospel is a collection of the sayings of Jesus that are in the context of his preaching ministry throughout Galilee, his proclamations to those who would listen. And, as ever, much of the teaching is very challenging, but in the last verse the tone changes.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Come to me to find relief from the burdens you are carrying. Come to me to find rest for your souls. Lay down all your concerns and worries, and put on the yoke of Christ to let him lead you in his paths.

So all three readings seem to have a commonality of structure in some way – a movement from a time of turmoil and stress towards a time of respite, a time of resolution of past issues, a time to rest in Christ. A time to find deep peace by placing our trust in His promises, accepted that we are forgiven, that we are his beloved children, surrendering our anxieties to Him, and relying on His grace rather than our own strength. That of course is not easy. If we had been gathered for worship a hundred years ago, our primary diet would have been prayer book Mattins and we would have recited or chanted each week Psalm 95, one of the great psalms of praise that begins

O come, let us sing unto the Lord : let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

But towards the end it moves to a darker theme

To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts : as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; When your fathers tempted me : proved me, and saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said : It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways; Unto whom I swear in my wrath : that they should not enter into my rest.

There the psalmist is referring to the events following the Exodus, again back to the book of Genesis, when the Israelites squabbled with each other, looked to their own needs rather than following God's way, tested God's patience to the limit, and were unable to enter into his rest – here both a physical place in Canaan and a spiritual place, finding their peace and needs in God. And whilst this sounds a rather negative thing to say or sing weekly, it sets out clearly what can disrupt and destroy our peace, the church's peace, our walk with God – arguing, looking to our own needs rather than others, wanting things our way, refusing to listen to God's commandments, the hardening of our hearts to God and to others.

So an invitation today, to reflect on the rather lovely and uplifting love story of Isaac and Rebekah, to know again that we are the forgiven children of God and that nothing can separate us from his love, to hear again the words of our Lord calling us to his rest.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

In the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen