

## St Peter's Milton. Sunday 6 September 10am Holy Communion. VISION. 1. CARE.

**Songs:** Let there be love shared among us  
Father I place into your hands..

**Bible Readings:** Acts 10v1-15. Vision of Cornelius and Peter.  
Psalm 149 Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise  
in the assembly of the saints...  
John 13v31-35. A New Commandment.

A vision: **'To serve Christ and shine as a beacon for his love and glory in this community.'**

**Four Key Words: Care, Share, Grow and Show.**

(Note: St. Paul's Weston: Reach, Teach, Mend and Send)

### Daily Prayer:

*Father God help us*

*To CARE for those we already know and those YOU are  
bringing into your church family.*

*To SHARE freely what we have with others,*

*To GROW your church in this place and*

*To SHOW us the way to support and encourage each other  
In this vision for St. Peter's, for Your Glory, in Jesus' name. AMEN.*

### Introduction to Sermon. Importance of Vision.

A prayer from Lectio 365 about Learning from the Bible.  
**'Holy Spirit, my teacher, would you awaken my heart, expand  
my mind and shape my identity today. AMEN'**

**Why do we need a Vision?** It is good to know what our life's  
purpose is personally and then also together as a church family, as  
part of the Body of Christ in Weston.

As a student in Brighton in 1970,71, I was asking myself these  
questions:

***Where did I come from? What am I doing here? How should I  
live? Where am I going to?***

These are questions of identity and purpose. Over a couple of years  
of searching for answers, I eventually found them in a relationship  
with God through Christ and then also had an experience of being  
filled with His Holy Spirit. A Key scripture for me was Isaiah 55v6,7.  
'Seek the Lord while He may be found...' So eventually my life's  
direction was reset – not as a Business Executive with BP but , after  
3 years VSO in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as a Vicar in the Church of  
England in mainly challenging parishes around UK and overseas.  
Pauline and I met in Bristol on a Church walk in 1978 and were  
married later that year. After ministry in the West Midlands, Surrey &  
Cyprus we ended up in five rural parishes in East Devon before  
retiring to Weston in February this year.

**What is Vision?** It is about imagination, 'blue-sky thinking', out of  
the box sight, 'an idea or mental image of something – a future  
possibility'.

Many of God's prophets received visions from God about the state of  
the nation of Israel or about God's holy character, glory and  
presence.

- Ezekiel had visions of God's shekinah glory. Ezek. Ch. 1,11,  
43
- Isaiah had a vision of God's holiness at the time of his call.  
Ch. 6
- Daniel had visions of Elam = Persian concerning the future.  
Ch. 7,8
- Nahum was given a prophetic vision about the fall of Nineveh.

Jacob/Israel was spoken to be God in a vision at Beersheba and  
reassured not to be afraid to enter Egypt. (Genesis 46)  
Abraham also heard God in a vision. Genesis 15v11 'Do not be  
afraid, I am your shield and your great reward'  
Both Peter and Paul were spoken to by God in a heavenly vision.

**Acts 9.** Jesus met Saul who became Paul on the Damascus Road in a vision and also spoke to him about his future ministry and suffering.

See also **Acts 26v16-18** ‘ ..... *to open their (Gentile) eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*’

**Acts 10.** First God speaks to Cornelius in a vision which he obeys and calls for Simon Peter who is staying nearby. Peter is given the same vision three times about a sheet coming down from heaven. All sorts of animals, clean and unclean, kosher and non kosher, hallal and haram, are there. A voice says ‘ Rise Peter, kill and eat’. Peter resists three times but eventually overcomes his prejudice against ‘Gentile dogs’ – the unclean – and so is willing to travel with, visit, share the good news with the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his whole household. And so, the Gospel message was passed across the huge cultural barrier of the day into the non-Jewish majority world, and so eventually after many years to us in Weston Super Mare!!

1 Samuel 3. Samuel was called in a vision as a child and given a message for the old priest Eli and his wayward sons. No-one is too young to receive a vision and call from God!

**Proverbs 29v18** ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish...’ or put off all restraint. **KJV.** ‘A Nation without God’s guidance is a nation without order. Happy are those who keep God’s law!’ GNBDC

**20:20 Vision.** Means that you have normal visual sight (clarity and sharpness of vision) measured at a distance of 20 feet. You can see all that you should normally see at that distance. John McEnroe ‘ Serious’, often questioned line calls at tennis before Hawkeye.

**Hebrews 12v2** ‘Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end...’ GNB

#### **Other Visions.**

- Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. In all His glory with Moses & Elijah. This is my beloved Son, .... Listen to Him.
- John on the Isle of Patmos on the Lord’s day, sees a vision of the Ascended and Glorified Jesus. Revelation Chapter 1.
- John has many other visions of the Heavenly Glory.... Chapters 4-22. 7 visions . God wins in the end.

**Dreams and Visions.** Acts 2v17. On the day of Pentecost, Peter speaks to the crowd after the Holy Spirit has descended in tongues of fire on the waiting, praying disciples (120 in the Upper Room).  
**‘ Your sons and daughters will prophesy, proclaim my message. Young men shall see visions and old me shall see dreams...’**

Year 2000. Concert and Musical ‘Hopes and Dreams’ Rob Frost and Paul Field, Methodist Churches all over UK and NEC. Earlier musical Visions (1985)

1. Creation 2. Solomon’s Temple 3. Elijah’s Contest 4. Ezekiel’s Valley 5. Mary’s Song 6. Baptism 7. The Cross and the Empty Tomb 8. Pentecost 9. River of Life (1) 10. River of Life (2). (Mainly instrumental. Performed at the NEC, Birmingham in 1980s with visuals).

**THE VISION.** See [www.24-7prayer.com](http://www.24-7prayer.com)

**‘What’s the vision? What’s the big idea?’**

***The Vision? ‘The Vision is JESUS – obsessively, dangerously, undeniably Jesus. The vision is an army of young people. You see bones? I see an army...***

***What is the Vision? The vision is holiness that hurts the eyes. It makes children laugh and adults angry.... And the army is disciple(in)ed... and the generation prays like a dying man with groans beyond talking.... Waiting... Watching... 24-7-365.***

***Whatever it takes they will give. Their DNA chooses JESUS (He breathes out, they breathe in).***

## Alternative short Introduction.

At the NEC, Birmingham in 1986, I remember seeing a Musical called '**Visions**' with music composed by Paul Field. It was a brief tour from Creation to New Creation, Genesis to Revelation with music and spectacular visuals to portray the awesome, holy, might presence of the glory of God down through biblical history.

For the last 35 years, Christians worldwide have been praying for the Muslim world during the 30 days of Ramadan and on the Night of Power (day 26), they pray especially that Muslims will have Visions of Jesus. Many MBBs today can trace their faith in Jesus to an encounter with Him in a vision, rather like John did on the Island of Patmos as recorded in Revelation Chapter 1. Many Iranians have come to faith that way and most recently a Palestinian son of an Imam also. Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors, has worked in the Middle East for many years and explains ISLAM = I Sincerely Love All Muslims.

Peter's Vision and Call to go to the enemy Roman invader Cornelius was also severely shocking, yet eventually he obeyed the vision and the Gospel came to non-Jews and hence eventually to us in Weston Super Mare!

So, Vision is important and you at St. Peter's already have a written Vision – CARE, SHARE, GROW AND SHOW.... And I hope to have a look at this from the Scriptures on the first Sunday of each month from now till December, God willing.

**CARE.** What is the true foundation for our Christian lives? Jesus was once asked about the greatest commandment and he replied. Matthew 22v36-40

**'Love the Lord your God.... And love your neighbour as yourself'**. In Luke 10v25-37, he gives this reply to a lawyer who is testing him about what to do to inherit eternal life. And then Jesus gives the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

So the Greatest Commandment is to LOVE – God, others and ourselves.

This echoes the Shema from Deuteronomy 6v4,5

***"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."***

And the Command in Leviticus 19v8

***'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.'***

But how can we do that? Jesus gives a visual demonstration by washing his disciples feet and then gives them a New Commandment

***'Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another'*** John 13v34,35

In addition to the Greatest Commandment, we also have the **Great Commission**, which were Jesus' parting words to His disciples as He ascended to heaven.

***'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising, teaching... and I will be with you always, to the end of the age.'*** Matthew 28v19,20

So, Jesus' instructions for His followers can be summed up in two words.

**LOVE** – God, our neighbours and ourselves, as He loves us.

**GO** – make disciples of all nations, local and to the ends of the earth.

BUT, we cannot do either of these things UNLESS we have first received God's love into our hearts and the power of the Holy Spirit to equip us to be witnesses for Him. Receive God's love so that we can LOVE OURSELVES as He loves us, then we can indeed LOVE our Neighbour as Ourselves. J. O. Y. Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last. ??

So, where does CARE come in God's priorities for our life and purpose for living on earth? How does this apply personally and also together in our families, our church, our community and our nation?

**Scripture Memory Verse: 'Casting all your care on him, because He cares for you' 1 Peter 5v7 (NKJV) or 'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'**

**Song: Cast your burdens onto Jesus, for He cares for you.... XX**

**Higher, higher.. lift up Jesus higher... XX**

The context is a life of humility and watchfulness in our walk with God, recognising that there is an enemy around who seeks to undermine and even 'devour' us, like a roaring lion! The early church then and in so many places today was under pressure.

How often do we say the words 'Take Care' or 'Be careful'. When driving and you are the passenger or maybe when you say goodbye to a friend or family member.

Or maybe you have said 'Don't you care?' or 'She doesn't care anymore' to someone, perhaps in desperation or concern.

The **dictionary definition for Care** is: *watchful and protective attention, caution, concern, prudence or regard usually towards an action, person or situation.* The opposite, of course, is neglect or negligence and we are all aware of the legislation about Safe Guarding and taking Due Care in situations which might be harmful.

However, does that mean that we never take any risks, because we might put ourselves in danger?

Conversation with two of my relatives last week. When they were young, they played 'Russian Roulette' on their bikes at age 10, hurtling across a busy main road and another road down Park Street in Bristol with no hands on the handlebars of his bike (during Lockdown recently when few cars around!).

**Care is the Synonym of Love**, not according to the English language but **according to feeling**.

As a **noun**, the word CARE could also mean 'Safe Keep, supervision, custody, charge, protection, keeping, control, management, guidance.

As a **verb**, it can mean 'bother, mind, be concerned, worried, be interested or take care, tend, take charge, nurse, provide, foster, protect, watch, guard.

We use the words 'Taken into Care' meaning often taking charge of a needy youth or child without parental support.

**Be careful** may mean '*avoiding damage or risk, being thoughtful, attentive, vigilant, watchful, cautious, conscientious, mindful, precise, accurate.*

The opposite is carelessness – neglect, disregard or a feeling or occasion for anxiety!

**So, how do we get the balance between loving care and risk taking?** I believe that this may well be about our personality and gifting as some people are given the faith to take risks more than others but love must always be supreme. Paul took great risks for the Gospel, yet he affirmed the primacy of Love. The faith, hope and love remain but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13v13)

**So, WHO or WHAT should we care ABOUT?** I would like to suggest FOUR main areas for us to direct our CARE and LOVE, as follows:

1. **CARE FOR GOD FIRST.** Love Him with all our heart, soul (which includes our mind, will and emotions), strength. Care for the honour of His name and His reputation, His kingdom, His truth, His Son Jesus and His Spirit. Love His Word, the Bible which is the main (but not the only way) that God has revealed Himself to us.

**How?** UP.. Worship and adore Him. Trust Him with our lives. Receive His love into our hearts through Jesus by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Read and Listen to and Obey God's Word daily. One help is LECTIO 365 app available . Prayer matters. Sparkbrook Church. Weekly prayer group with 7 people. Began 2X2 outreach also.

2. **CARE FOR GOD'S WORLD.** Honour and respect God's Creation and His Creatures, animals, fish, birds and especially all human kind. Look after the world that God has made and everything in it. Remember, Adam's first jobs were to take care of Eden and Eve. Being a Gardner and a Husband were two essential areas to care for. Of course Adam and Eve were both equally created in the image of God.

**How?** ARocha , Farming God's Way, Marriage and family life according to Scripture  
CARE for the Family – Cardiff. Rob Parsons...

3. **CARE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.** Of course, God wants us to love and care for each other within the Family of God. He is concerned about the Unity and Health of His body in every way. We shall look at this more in further studies.

**How? IN** For example – this Plaque with the ONE ANOTHERS is so important....(read)

A Healthy Church will be a Growing Church. So, 'speak the truth in love, pastoral care, fellowship and encouragement. Weekly Zoom, small groups or even phone calls. Eg. Dorestine phoned and prayed for people even when in a Care Home.

4. **CARE FOR GOD'S MISSION.** God wants to bring restoration and healing of a broken world and people. Our current world pandemic is not the first in human history. It is a reminder that we live in a Fallen, Broken world that needs the healing and forgiving power of Jesus. Our call is to Care for His World and the People by sharing the Good News – Jesus Saves.

**How?** What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear  
All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.

**How?** An overflow of joyful, loving people of God who love, honour, serve and tell the good news in the power of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate it by loving one another as Jesus has loved them.

**Cast all your care (worries and anxieties) upon Him, for He cares for (loves, believes in and honours) you.**

### Questions for Application and Further Reflection.

1. Who or what is the most important person that I care for in my life at present? How do I express that Care? In what ways could I do that better?
2. In what ways do I need to receive Care and Love from others at present? What could I be doing about this?
3. How am I doing in Caring for God's Name and Reputation? How could I improve and what help do I need?
4. What is the Vision or Purpose for my life at present? Whatever age and stage of life, do we know why we are here and what we should be doing and how to live?
5. Are there specific worries or concerns I have for myself or others that I could be praying about or sharing with others? Could I do need to do some 'self-care'?
6. How can I Care for God's Creation better?
7. How can I Care for God's People better?
8. How can I Care for God's Mission better? What help do I need?

For those who would like to do some further Bible Reading about Vision, have a look at the following passages:

- Genesis 15. Abraham's Vision
- Genesis 46. Jacob's Vision
- 1 Samuel 3. Samuel's Vision and Call
- 1 Kings 3. Solomon's Vision & Prayer
- Isaiah 6. Isaiah's Vision and Call

Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel's Vision of Dry bones  
Luke 1. Zechariah and Mary's Vision  
Luke 3. Jesus' Vision at his Baptism  
Luke 9. The Transfiguration of Jesus  
Luke 23, 24 Cross and Resurrection of Jesus  
Acts 1,2. Ascension & Pentecost  
Revelation 1. Vision of Jesus  
Revelation 21,22. Vision of the Holy Jerusalem

In each passages ask yourself Three Questions:

1. *What does it tell me about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?*
2. *What does it tell me about human nature?*
3. *What command, promise, warning or encouragement can I find here?*