**Reflection for Wednesday 27th January 2021**

1 John 2:28-3:10

In this letter John has been warning the early Christians against following false teaching – echoing the warning Jesus gave to “Watch out for false prophets . . . by their fruit you will recognise them”

John is particularly concerned that his listeners don’t get led astray by Gnostics, who don’t consider any behaviour to be sinful, but that they should behave like Children of God, and should be recognised as such, reflecting family values and being seen as a ‘chip off the old block’.

John uses the typical Rabbinical teaching style of exaggeration several times in this letter to make his point even to saying that “No one who is born of God will continue to sin”. Even St Paul found this impossible – saying “When I want to do good, evil is right there with me . . . waging war against my mind.”

But John reminds us that this is why Jesus came, to destroy the devil’s work and enable us to have “Life, and have it to the full’. Having life to the full doesn’t mean (as some early Christians mistakenly thought) that we can do just as we please, but it does mean doing what pleases God. But this is not to earn God’s love, but is to be a response to the Father who loves us. Our response to anyone we admire or appreciate is to want to please them and become more like them. Jesus himself said “If you love me, you will obey my commands” – if we do, we become more and more like him.

Perhaps we should check up on some of those commands by reading again the ‘sermon on the mount’ (Matthew chapters 5 to 7) or the ‘sermon on the plain’ (Luke 6:17-49).

The words of the hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways’ seem a fitting prayer as we remember how much God loves us and wants to welcome us home, as He did the prodigal Son

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways:  
reclothe us in our rightful mind; in purer lives your service find,  
in deeper reverence praise, in deeper reverence praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard, beside the Syrian sea,  
the gracious calling of the Lord let us, like them, obey his word:  
'Rise up and follow me, rise up and follow me!'

O sabbath rest by Galilee! O calm of hills above,  
when Jesus shared on bended knee the silence of eternity  
interpreted by love, interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all our words and works that drown  
the tender whisper of your call, as noiseless let your blessing fall  
as fell your manna down, as fell your manna down.

Drop your still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of your peace, the beauty of your peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire your coolness and your balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire, speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm, O still small voice of calm!

Let us think more about how much God loves us, as we read Psalm 103.

Collect for Epiphany 3

God of all mercy

Your Son proclaimed good news to the poor,

Release to the captives,

And freedom to the oppressed.

Anoint us with your Holy Spirit

And set all your people free

To praise you in Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord, in these troubled times when many are fearful or anxious, help us to remember that we are your beloved children and that you will never leave us, nor forsake us.

So we pray for:

Roads in Sunnyside Parish: Ivy House Lane and New Street (off Ellesmere Road)

Roads in Bourne End: Sharpes Lane and Pix Farm Lane

All teachers, parents and students, struggling with overwhelming responsibilities

Front line workers, especially those exhausted and traumatised by all they have to deal with.

Those delivering and administering the vaccine, that those who need it most will receive it.

That we may all, as children of our loving heavenly Father, exhibit those qualities which

bring hope, joy, love, peace and compassion into a broken world. **Amen**