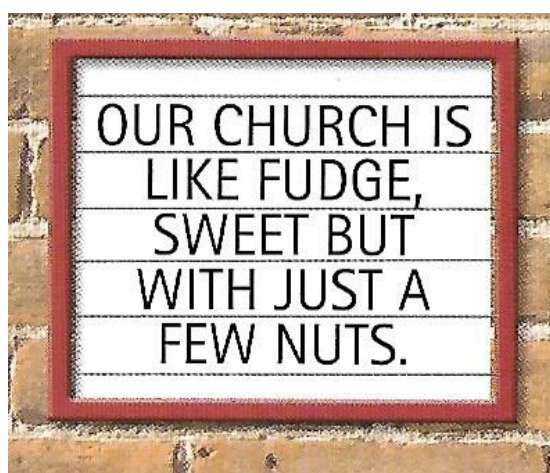
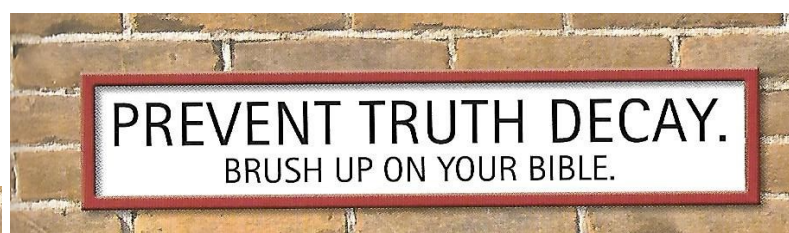
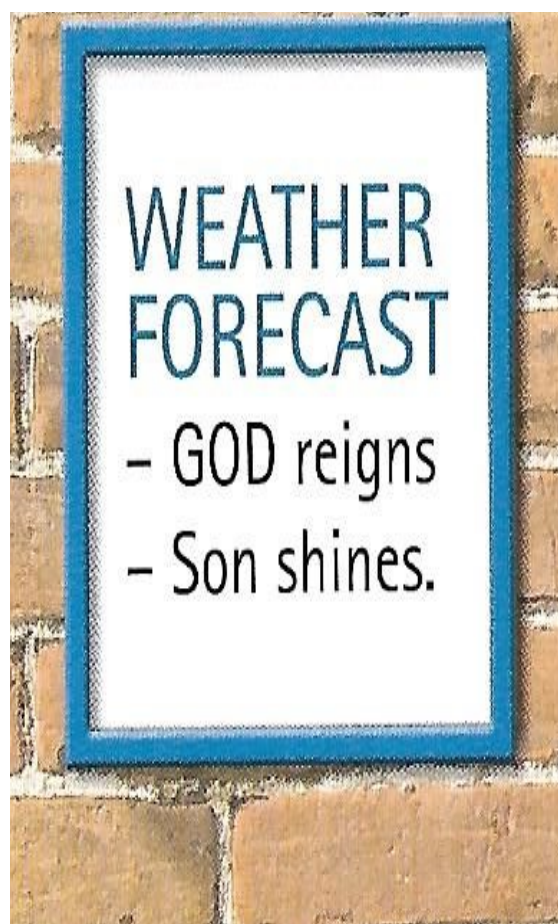
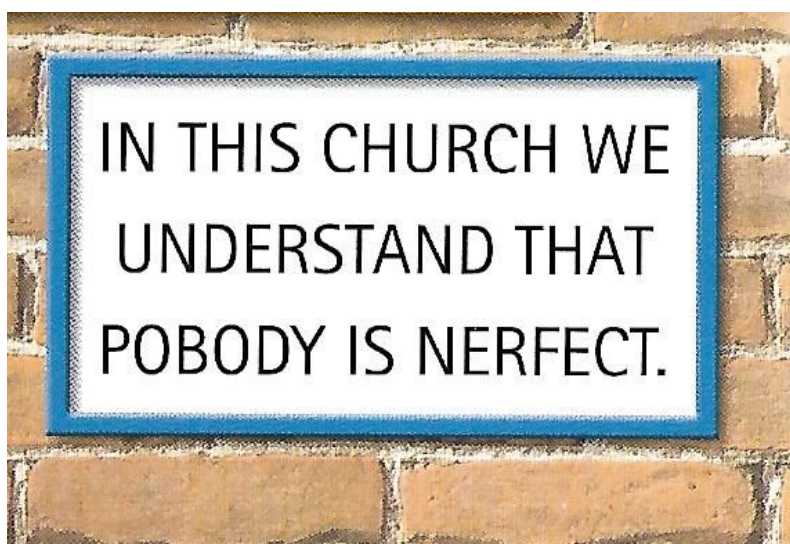


**Benefice of Great Hanwood, Longden and Annscroft
with Pulverbatch
JUNE 2021
DAY 1**

**Some signs seen outside
churches**



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH JUNE 2021

You've probably heard a version of this story before but here goes. A young man wasn't sure he wanted to propose to his girl friend. He had been to Sunday school where they had taught him that the Bible could tell him what to do. So he got his Bible, opened it at random and found himself reading the first chapter of the letter to the Romans. His eyes fell on the phrase, "Grace to you and peace, from God our Father". "That's it," he thought to himself. "I'll ask Grace to marry me."



It wasn't this story that led me to write this article. It was listening to Susi Dent speaking about the origin of words on the Countdown programme. And I thought to myself, "We use many words in our worship and prayers but do we really know what they mean?" And one of the most common prayers is "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ...". So what exactly does "grace" mean? It occurs over 1200 times in the New Testament and in different contexts so it is a very difficult word to define. "Grace" is the English translation of the Greek word "charis" from which our word "charisma" is derived.



The ancient Greeks used the word as a greeting in their letters. If, at that time, I was writing a letter to Aunt Agatha, I would start my letter on these lines, "To my dearest Aunt Agatha, grace to you from your devoted nephew." Here, it would simply denote "Greeting" or "Good wishes". Paul uses that familiar Greek greeting in most of his letters (coupled with the Jewish greeting "Shalom" or "peace") but he gives it a very Christian meaning "Grace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ .."

In the New Testament, "Charis" is associated with two things. First, the glory that is in Jesus - his love, brightness, joy, beauty and compassion. St. John, at the beginning of his Gospel says "we have seen His glory .. full of grace and truth." But then both John and Paul make it clear that through his cross Jesus has broken down all the barriers between God and ourselves. So John goes on to write, "From his fulness we all received, grace upon grace.". And, as we have seen, Paul greet his friends, "Grace and Peace from our Lord Jesus Christ.". They are saying that all the love, beauty, brightness, joy of Jesus and His closeness to God his Father can be poured into our lives - I suppose in so far as we are able or want to receive it.

Another word we use frequently in worship is "mercy". In our communion service we often say, "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us." "Mercy" is another word with a very deep meaning. On the face of it it means, "Have pity on us" or perhaps "Forgive us" and it does mean that. But it also means much more. It is a combination of forgiveness, strength (especially to overcome difficulties), goodness and steadfast lovingkindness. So when we say "Lord have mercy", we are saying "Dear Lord, pour out your lovingkindness upon us."

Perhaps all this is more than we can grasp. But what a wealth of meaning in the simple phrases we use in our prayers and worship!



Colin Hurford

A Stroll Along the Severn

After what may have been the driest April on record, we seemed to have encountered the wettest May! But on one Friday afternoon halfway through the month, I happened to be in Shrewsbury on a wonderfully dry and sunny afternoon, ideal for a walk along by the river. It didn't last, of course, and by evening we were back in monsoon conditions, but it remained bright and sunny for the whole of my stroll.

There's always plenty to see by the river - and to hear at this time of the year, as the birds were all singing to the sun. In the past I've seen kingfishers right in the middle of town, but there were far too many people about for that. Ducks quacked and moorhens peeped, and the house sparrows were chirping and chirruping energetically from the bushes by the path; there were blackbirds everywhere, too. I walked down to the weir, where despite the rush of the water a song thrush could be clearly heard.

Continuing on, and passing under the ring road, I came to a quieter stretch, not so much walked. The sun after so much damp weather was raising a heady scent of may blossom and cow parsley, enough almost to take your breath away, and among the songs were willow warbler, chaffinch, blackcap and chiffchaff, while just ahead of me a bullfinch alighted briefly on the hawthorn, with his deep pink breast, slate grey back and black head and tail looking almost tropical in the bright sun.

A mute swan had kept me company for some distance as I walked. I was walking fairly briskly, but he was doing no work at all - the river was reasonably high, and moving at a fair lick. Eventually he decided that, even so, it wasn't fast enough, and he took off, splashing his way into the air then just flying a hundred yards or so downstream before settling back on the water. Before that, though, he had passed close to a cormorant sitting on an overhanging bough and looking absolutely resplendent in his Spring clothes. Cormorants can at times look a bit tatty, but this one was so bright and glossy he might have come straight from the spray shop.



Along this section of river is a section of sandy bank cut away by winter floods, where I've seen sand martins nesting previously. There were none this year, though - sand martins seem to move quite frequently to new suitable nesting sites as they open up, which they do. The river is always changing; every Spring it has a new geography.

I walked up from the river bank to turn back along the line of the old Shrewsbury Canal, now little more than a damp channel filled with marsh plants. There were more people here, but still plenty of birds, including a bold swallow that flew fairly low over our heads as I was passing a family group, and a heron that lifted from a nearby patch of pasture. There were butterflies too - orange tips (only the male has the orange, and they are very active as they search for the shyer white females) and speckled woods, mid-brown with buff spots. All too soon, though, I was back at the busy roadside, still smelling the may blossom, but no longer able to hear the birdsong.

Rev Bill Rowell

Just a Thought—another church sign:-

GOD LOVES YOU

WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT

And now for some well earned fun:-

Ben had been misbehaving and was sent to his room. After a while he emerged and informed his mother that he had thought it over and then said a prayer.

"Fine" said the pleased mother. "If you ask God' to help you not to misbehave, He will help you."

"Oh I didn't ask Him to help me not to misbehave ", said Ben "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

From A Little book of Church Humour.

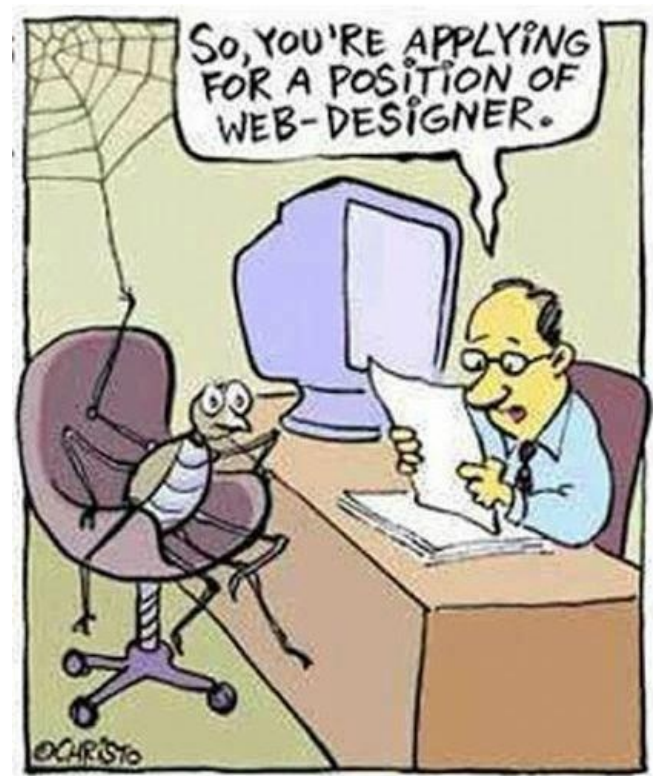
From Parish Pump

The Lord's work

On leaving the local Churches Together lunch, the Catholic priest was heard to say to the Methodist minister: "Well, at the end of the day, we're all doing the Lord's work: you in your way, and I in His."

Talking

Bishop Douglas Feaver, the notoriously outspoken former Bishop of Peterborough, was presiding at his first Diocesan Synod and a man at the back had been droning on and on for some length of time. Finally, a lady called out to protest that she could not hear what he was saying. Bishop Douglas replied: "You should thank God and sit down."



And for 'digital aliens' like me:-

Sent in by Gillian Brown

