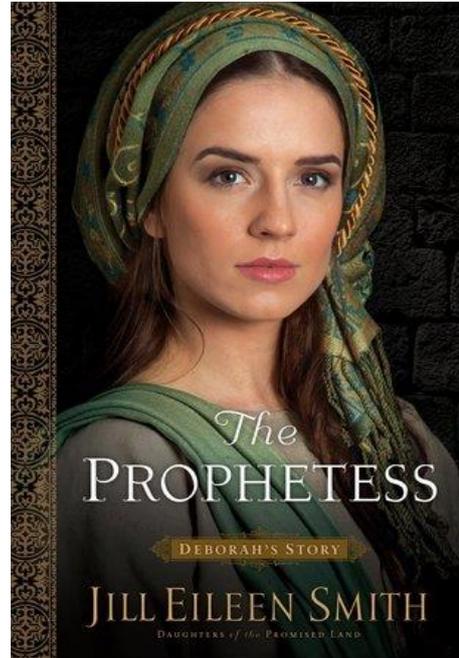
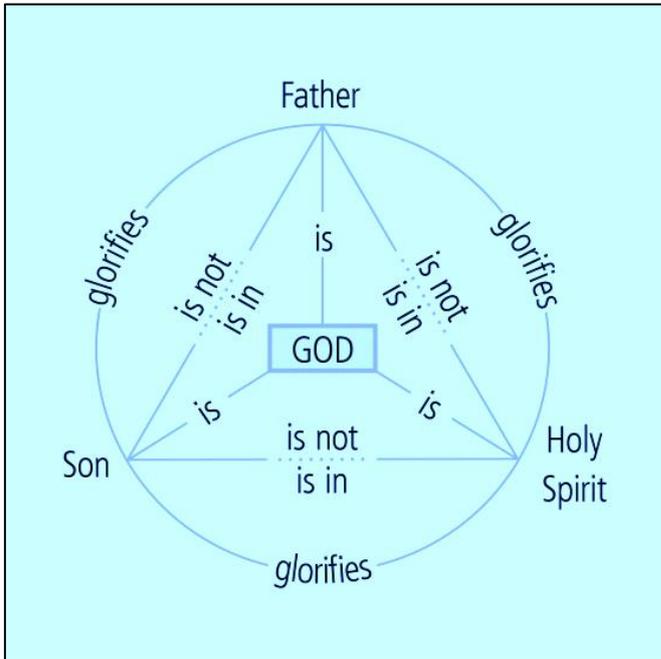




ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH  
LONG NEWTON

**Sunday Worship for 7 June 2020**  
**Trinity Sunday**



**Service Leader's Introduction from John Lambert**

Good morning everyone and welcome to this virtual service. Though we cannot come together physically, we gather spiritually as the family of God in our Father's presence.

Today, is Trinity Sunday which will be reflected in the hymns, the creed and the blessing at the end. Today is also the day we begin a new series on *Women in the Bible* and, fittingly, Gill Clayton one of the wonderful women on our ministry team will start us off preaching on Deborah, a formidable character from the Book of Judges about whom novels are still written today. I haven't read the book above so I can neither endorse nor denounce it!

There is one small mercy about not meeting publicly this morning, as the first reading contains many names that are tricky to pronounce. I think we'd have to draw lots to determine the unfortunate individual who'd have to stand up and read it in front of everyone!

It was Timothy Leary who once quipped, "Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition!" Our own local church is of course named after one of the greatest examples of faith in the history of the world; a woman - Jesus' mother Mary who said, at a time of overwhelming personal bewilderment, "let it be to me according to Your word." Since Jesus' earthly ministry, when a number of women provided for his material needs (Luke 8.1-3), women have had a special place of honour in the church. They were privileged as the first witnesses of the resurrection, let us not forget. We look forward to what Gill and others will share with us in this series.

## Greeting and Opening Prayer

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart;  
**I will enter his courts with praise.**

**We come together in the name of Christ  
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,  
to hear and receive God's holy word,  
to pray for the needs of the world,  
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,  
that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may give ourselves to the service of God.**

The night has passed and the day lies open before us.  
Let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Silence is kept for personal prayer.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and forever. **Amen.**

## Sung Worship

**1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning  
Our song shall rise to Thee:  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!**

**2. Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns  
Around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who were, and are, and ever more shall be.**

**3. Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man  
Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in power, in love and purity.**

**4. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name  
In earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!**

## **Confession**

Let us now spend a moment reflecting before God on the things we have said and done which put a distance between us and his love...

As members of God's family, let us come back to him to seek his forgiveness.'

**Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.**

**We are not worthy to be called your children.**

**We turn to you again.**

**Have mercy on us and bring us back to yourself  
as those who once were dead but now have life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw us to himself and cleanse us from all our sins  
that we may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Reading: Judges 4.1-16**

Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

"Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command.

Deborah also went up with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaananim near Kedesh.

When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left.

Your word is a lantern to our feet:  
**and a light upon our path.**

## Reading: Luke 8.22-25

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

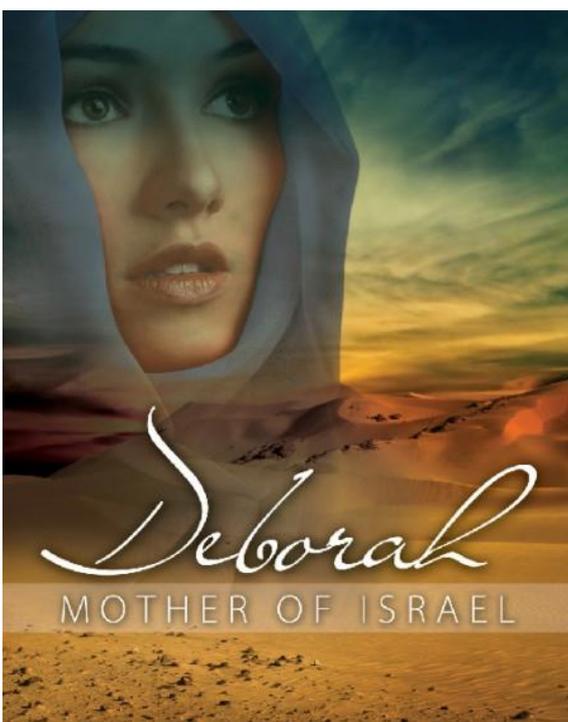
Your word is a lantern to our feet:  
**and a light upon our path.**

## Talk: 'Women in the Bible: Deborah' (by Gill Clayton)

### Introduction

Before I begin this morning, I feel a sense of sadness, as this is the last time John will lead our service. John and I have ministered together at Saint Mary's and All Saints' from the beginning of his time with us; we have shared Christian fellowship, respect for one another's preaching and teaching and I will very much miss his encouragement and spiritual leading. Paul and I wish John and Kathie every blessing for the future. Likewise, the absence of dear Tom Whitfield is another loss I feel this morning. Tom was a great encourager, never failing to comment on an aspect of the sermon that spoke personally to him. I often told Tom that I didn't find it easy to preach, "I just give the talk and say what God has laid on my heart." Tom's reply inevitably would be, "Well he spoke to me this morning Gill". God bless you Tom. Our thoughts and prayers are with Audrey and the family at this sad time.

Today we begin a new study for four weeks, focusing on four women mentioned in Scripture. We begin with one of the outstanding women of biblical history, Deborah, who occupied a dual role as the only female prophet and Judge mentioned in the Bible (the only other person mentioned, who was both a prophet and a Judge, was Samuel) and her story shows that God can accomplish great things through people who are willing to be led by him.

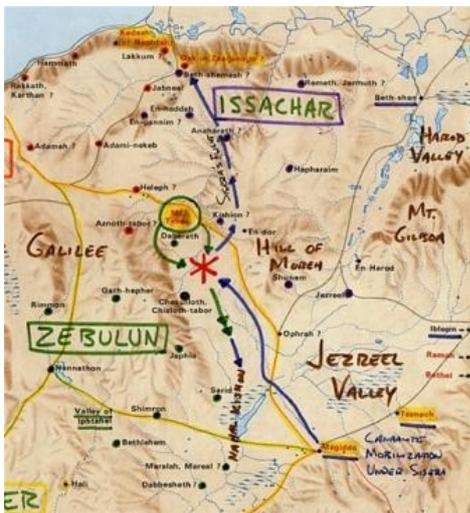


## Brief historical overview

Following the death of Joshua, after the Israelites had entered the Promised Land of Canaan, and prior to an Israelite monarchy being established, the Judges were chosen by God, to serve as military leaders in times of crisis, to establish justice in a Godly manner and protect the rights of the poor.

The people of Israel at this time had been oppressed by Jabin the king of Canaan for twenty years, due to their own disobedience; they didn't listen to God as they should have, often lapsing into ways that weren't pleasing to God, such as idolatry and the worship of Baal. As a punishment they were often defeated in battle.

One of the roles of the Judges was to mobilise the forces of the nation against the oppressors. Deborah was a Judge at a time when Israel was being overrun by a coalition of Canaanites, who were better equipped and more technologically advanced - they had 900 iron chariots - than the Israelites, led by a man named Sisera.



Deborah tells Barak, the most influential man in Israel, a military commander, that God has commanded him to raise an army of 10,000 troops to attack the Canaanites. Barak refused to undertake the task himself, his reply was, "I will go but only if you go with me!" Judges 4:6. Barak showed his lack of faith in God and Deborah warned Barak that if she went with him, he wouldn't get the glory. Her prophecy came true, the Canaanites were defeated - God sent rain and a flash flood, the iron chariots were bogged down in the mud (images of the Somme come to mind) and the victory, as prophesied by Deborah went to a woman called Jael, who killed Sisera, not to Barak.

However, it's interesting to note that Deborah didn't abandon Barak for his lack of faith, she accompanied him and gave him strength, a good example of a man and woman supporting one another in a time of need. Deborah could have humiliated him for his hesitancy, but she didn't, she supported him. I wonder if there is someone in your life this morning you can bolster by your presence?

## Deborah a prophet, judge, poet and divinely inspired leader

God had specifically chosen Deborah, to lead the Israelites at this time, even though it was highly uncommon for a woman to lead an army. I remember in my work life the metaphor, "breaking through the glass ceiling", was used by many professional women, who found it hard to rise to positions of leadership, due to gender discrimination, even though they were eminently suitable for the role, In modern day terms Deborah had broken through "the glass ceiling". She was certainly charismatic, not selected officially by the people, but raised up by God (Yahweh) to drive out oppressors and give rest to the land and people. At this time in history (12th century B.C.) God's spirit came to empower the Judge to deal with a particular situation

and the people could see Deborah had special qualities that were God given. Another reminder that God chooses leaders by His standards and not ours.



Wise leaders are rare, I suspect many of us have worked with people whose leadership skills are a bit dubious, others have been really inspirational. At a time when society was patriarchal and women were subordinate to men (not easy in any historical period) Deborah was a Judge for forty years; she stands out as a strong leader who knew how to get the best from those with whom she worked. Some people in leadership roles are a bit hungry for power, Deborah was unlike this, her motives for all she did was to serve God, whatever praise came her way she always gave God the credit. In the Song of Deborah, one of the oldest poems in the Bible, she celebrates all that the Lord has done by stressing, 'When the Israel leaders take charge, and the people gladly follow - bless the Lord!' Judges 5:2.

She was fearless in her praise for the Lord, and defied cultural norms by speaking to those in positions of power in a forthright manner: 'Listen you kings! Pay attention you mighty rulers! For I will sing to the Lord. I will lift up my song to the Lord, the God of Israel.' Judges 5:3 (NLT).

Even though she held such a high status position her role as wife was important she is described as: Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. Judges 4:4.

Nowhere in the reading does it suggest Deborah was superior to her husband or he was inferior to her. Sadly, the focus by some who read this passage can become limited to gender roles, which narrows the study to a one-dimensional issue, when the real focus is God and the way Deborah is faithful to his will. I'd like to think that in all good marriages a supporting role by either gender is essential; Lappidoth recognised the attributes of his wife and having his support would, I feel sure, be a source of comfort for her.

Thankfully, in modern marriages gender defined roles have become much less important than in the past. Deborah was a strong administrator of God's plan, like the matriarchs in Genesis, she was a God loving woman who listened to God and was obedient to his call, sharing his word with others, knowing when to say the right thing in a given situation, "the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided." Judges 4:5. Isn't it good in our everyday life, that God directs us to fellow Christians, who we know and respect, to help us when we're troubled?

In our church circles we can recognise those who God has chosen for a specific role or task and when we see that spiritual side of faith in action we're motivated to be like minded, not self-seeking, but totally in awe of how the Holy Spirit can work in people's lives. As Christians we are constantly in need of daily lessons, we are far from the finished product, but in the midst of our striving it's always good to let others know when they uplift us, when we see something of the Holy Spirit working through them, God moments.

Deborah was courageous, a timely reminder for us today to be bold on the metaphoric battlefield where our Lord has placed us. Deborah judged sitting under a palm tree, no false trappings, or grand palaces, she stood true and was known for her wisdom, courage and faith in action. In Judges 5:7 she describes herself as, "I Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel" which clearly suggests her maternal qualities and gives us further insight into her multi-faceted leadership style.

During this period of lockdown, it would be so easy to be brow beaten by this virus, nervous of what the future holds, worried about our families and all the other wretched thoughts we can dwell on. Deborah challenges us in many ways, she encourages us to use our energy on what we can do, rather than on worrying about what we have no control over. Like the disciples in our reading from Luke, we cry, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" Jesus asks us, "Where is your faith? Luke 8:24. Sometimes this is just the word we need to hear.

All of us have missed the close fellowship we share here at Saint Mary's, being part of a church family is special to us all and in many ways, we miss being together sharing the Eucharist and enjoying fellowship over coffee and cakes. I've missed the hugs, given just when needed, a thing of the past I feel for some time to come. Yet, rather like the motto from the book of Judges on the Lyle's tin of golden syrup, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness" we too have experienced sweetness in the kindness of those who phone and text, being led by the Holy Spirit and knowing when it's needed most.

As a church we are facing a time of change, when discernment and good judgement will be essential in choosing a new minister for Saint Mary's and All Saints'. As a church in joint benefice we have received many blessings from the Lord, and in this coming time we can draw strength from one another in our ability to pray earnestly for the right person to lead us in this next period. We need to listen to God's voice and pray for a minister of God's choosing who has some of the qualities of Deborah, a wise leader, regardless of gender. Amen.

### **Trinitarian Creed**

**We believe in God the Father,  
God almighty, by whose plan  
earth and heaven sprang to being,  
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,  
Son of God in human frame,  
virgin-born, the child of Mary  
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,  
like a lamb to slaughter led,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
he descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen,  
heaven's king to rule and reign,  
to the Father's side ascended  
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;  
in one Church, below, above:  
saints of God in one communion,  
one in holiness and love.  
So by faith, our sins forgiven,**

**Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,  
we shall rise with him in glory  
to the life that knows no end.**

### **Sung Worship**

**Father, we love You,  
We worship and adore You,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.**

**Jesus, we love You,  
We worship and adore You,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.**

**Spirit, we love You,  
We worship and adore You,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.**

### **Sunday Prayers (written by Mark Nile)**

Father God we come to you now to pray for our nation as we all try to work our way through to the other side of this Pandemic. We pray for those who are fearful and scared, we pray for those who want to get back on with life as soon as reasonably possible. Like with Brexit the evil one is exploiting this differing viewpoint to create division amongst us. May we be united at this time, knowing that life is never predictable or 100% safe but respecting those who's fears are real to them while having courage and confidence to return to the things that made up our lives previously.

Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you for those have been working throughout keeping our lights on, keeping water in our taps, emptying our bins, delivering our food , helping bury our loved ones with dignity, delivering our mail and on- line orders as well as caring for us medically. Please bless and protect these workers too numerous to mention in terms of numbers and roles.

Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we look at women of the bible over the next few months, we thank you Lord that you made humans male and female and for the blessing women of all ages around the globe bring to humanity and particularly your church. During your time on Earth Jesus you included women in Your ministry team right from the start. We pray for women in the world today who are denied access to education, health and any equality because of millennia old patriarchies that seek to undermine and keep them from fulfilling their God given potential. To be a female and a Christian means in many places to be persecuted for both your faith and your gender. We ask you to stand with women of faith around the world.

Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who mourn at this time father thinking particularly of Audrey and her family. Comfort those who mourn particularly when the mourning of a loved one is not as we would want it to be in terms of people being able to show their love and respect freely and openly. For those amongst us who are sick in mind, spirit or body we ask for your healing now as we name ourselves and others before you father...

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

### **Collect for Trinity Sunday**

**Holy God, faithful and unchanging:  
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,  
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,  
that we may truly worship you,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory  
are yours, now and for ever. Amen**

### **The Peace**

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.  
The peace of the triune God be always with you.

*At this point, we would normally share God's peace with each other. We cannot do that physically but please spend a few minutes now praying for specific people at St. Mary's...*

### **Sung Worship**

**1. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!**

**2. Praise God the Father who's the source;  
Praise God the Son who is the course;  
Praise God the Spirit who's the flow;  
Praise God, our portion here below!**

## Ending

On this Trinity Sunday, Christians marvel at our mysterious, unfathomable, immeasurable and incomprehensible God. One God, who eternally exists as three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each person being fully God.

Attempting to explain the Trinity is like trying to set out the contents of the Encyclopaedia Britannica on the back of a matchbox. One of the greatest theologians ever, Saint Augustine, wrote 15 volumes on the Trinity and then lamented that he barely scratched the surface!

But, on this my final Sunday at Saint Mary's, I would like us to bless one another with a trinitarian blessing. The Apostle Paul signs off 2 Corinthians with a brief prayer that Christians will experience three things from each member of the Trinity; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, grace. We become Christians in the first place by discovering and experiencing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sweetness of grace that saved an absolute hopeless wretch like me. May grace abound in you. May many come to know this saving grace as they encounter Jesus by faith at Saint Mary's.

Secondly, love. Once we come to faith and start a new life, we begin to feel God's love for us as he pours it into our lives. It's love that flows from a perfect Father's warm, beating heart. I remember when our first child was born; I held Anna in my arms, 7lb 4 oz. I looked into her blinking eyes and I just *loved* her and *loved* her. (Just as well, because she didn't allow us any sleep for the next two years!) But God's love for us is *far* greater than the love of any human parent. May the transformative experience of God's love abound and overflow at Saint Mary's.

Then thirdly, fellowship. Knowing of God is not a private thing. God has designed Christian living to be enjoyed in community, so the third experience in this blessing is discovering the fellowship, the intimate friendship, of the Holy Spirit. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is about sharing deeply with one another. Showing mercy, not judgement, bearing with each other, forgiving each other, accepting one another, carrying one another's burdens.

This trinitarian blessing is not a formula. It is not just a little motto we attach to an end of a meeting, like "That's all folks." It's not just something we *say*, it's something we *taste* and *know*. This is our life; one in which we grow in our experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, evermore, Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**