



In Memory: Penelope Kittow, Royston Hopkins, Gwen Hayman, Anne Vooght, Muriel Duke, Jean Rogers-Came, Sam Ward, Clifford Raymont, Anthony 'Tony' Squire Parnell, Marina Harris, Lawrence Hurley and Penelope Hurley.

Points for Prayer. We pray for the families affected by the tragedy in Texas and the loss of innocent lives in such a violent and avoidable way and for the whole town of Uvalde as they come to terms with their loss.

Tree planting on Sunday 5th June at St Andrew's Churchyard, Ipplpen. Family Holy Communion will be at 11am, including children's activities. At 12 noon we will be moving to the churchyard to plant a tree for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Refreshments afterwards. All welcome!

Invitation to Jubilee Service at Exeter Cathedral on Saturday 4th June The Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral would like to extend an invitation to you and a guest to attend a Platinum Jubilee service at 4pm at Exeter Cathedral followed by a drinks' reception in the Bishop's palace garden. This will be a ticketed event. Please contact Exeter Cathedral if you wish to attend.

Trinity Sunday at Holy Trinity Church, Torbryan. An invitation to celebrate the revival of regular services at the beautiful 15th century Church of the Holy Trinity, Torbryan on Trinity Sunday 12th June 2022 at 4.30pm with The Reverend Andrew Down and the congregation. An inclusive candlelit service with prayer, hymns, readings, drama and meditation plus tea and cake afterwards.

Sunday 5th June at 4.30pm at St Andrew's Church Hall, Ipplpen. Come Holy Spirit – An informal Service for Pentecost. We gather for a time of prayer with music from the Taize community, time of silence and reflection, readings and prayers. All welcome!

Ascension to Pentecost. As we conclude our Easter season, we have a time of prayer waiting on the Holy Spirit and praying for the gifts we and others need at this time. What gifts will you ask for yourself or for others?

Readings	This week	Next week
Readings for this Sunday:		
1st Reading	Acts 16:16-34	Acts 2:1-21
	Psalm 97	104:25-35, 37
2nd Reading	Revelation 22:12-14	Romans 8:14-17
Gospel	John 14:23-29	John 14:8-17, 25-27

Readings for the week ahead:

Mon	30 th	John 16:29-End	Thurs	2 nd	John 17:20-End
Tue	31 st	Luke 1:39-56	Fri	3 rd	John 21:15-19
Wed	1 st	John 17:11-19	Sat	4 th	John 21:20-End

Readings can be viewed/downloaded from <https://bible.oremus.org/>

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Today's Sunday Services

10.00 am	Holy Communion – Mission Community Service	- St John the Baptist, Woodland
2.00 pm	Wedding of Attila 'James' Drury & Vanessa Callender	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston

Morning Prayer

This week morning prayer will be said at the following times:

Tuesday	9.15 am	- St Andrew's Ipplpen
Wednesday	9.15 am	- Online Via Zoom (for the zoom password email rev.andrewdown@gmail.com)

(No Morning Prayer on Thursday or Friday due to bank holiday)

Reflection

All our churches are open for private prayer and reflection throughout the week from approximately 9am to 5pm each day.

Mid-Week

Rev'd Andrew Down - Day off on Mondays. Church Office closed on Thursday and Friday.

Monday	3pm-5pm	T-Pot	- Church Cottage, Denbury
	1.00 pm	Funeral Service of Anthony 'Tony' Squire Parnell	- St Andrew's, Ipplpen
Tuesday	10.15 am	Holy Communion	- St Andrew's Ipplpen
	1.00 pm	Funeral Service of Clifford Raymont	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston
Wednesday	12.00 noon	Churches Together Lunch Club	- St Andrew's Church Hall, Ipplpen
	2.00pm	Interment of Ashes of Lawrence Hurley and Penelope Hurley	- St Andrew's Churchyard, Ipplpen
	7.30 pm	Bellringing Practice	- St Andrew's, Ipplpen
Thursday		(No Midweek Communion today due to bank holiday)	
	3pm-Late	Party on the Green For the Queen's Platinum Jubilee	- Denbury
	4.30 pm	Sta*x Youth Choir Practice	- St Andrew's, Ipplpen
Saturday	10-12 noon	'Celebrating Denbury' Exhibition	- Church Cottage, Denbury

Next Sunday 5th June 2022 – Pentecost

9.30 am	Holy Communion	- St John the Baptist, Woodland
9.30 am	Celtic Morning Prayer	- St Mary the Virgin, Denbury
11.00 am	Holy Communion	- St Andrew's, Ipplpen
12 noon	Tree Plant in St Andrew's Churchyard for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Followed by refreshments in the Hall	- St Andrew's Churchyard, Ipplpen
3-5pm	Cream Teas and Exhibition	- Church Cottage, Denbury
4.30 pm	Come Holy Spirit – An informal Service for Pentecost	- St Andrew's Church Hall, Ipplpen



Reflection by Steve Sheldon

John 14:23-29
Sunday 29th May 2022

One of my favourite mystery writers is Phil Rickman whose stories are set in the Welsh borders and features a village vicar, the Rev Merrily Watkins who is also the Hereford Diocesan exorcist.

What we have in this story in Acts has nothing to do with exorcisms or evil spirits. We can learn nothing about deliverance ministry from this passage. Luke, who was an eye-witness to these events, is barely concerned with the details of the interaction between Paul and the slave-girl, as that story is just a means to a more important end, telling the reason for Paul's arrest, imprisonment and miraculous escape, resulting in the conversion and baptism of his jailer and family. In the few details we have from Luke, there is much to be learned and much that is relevant to us and the church today.

First of all the slave-girl was not possessed by a spirit or a demon or any such thing. The original Greek calls her a *python spirit*, which relates her to the oracle at Delphi which was represented by snakes, and where the local priestess would tell fortunes and predict the future in cryptic ways, a bit like the horoscopes in the daily papers.

This fortune teller of Philippi didn't use horoscopes, read palms or crystal balls, or cast bones or search through the entrails of sacrificed chickens. It is most likely that she was a ventriloquist; this was her special talent, throwing her voice in a way that gullible punters thought ghostly spirits were speaking to them about their future. She must have been good, because she made a lot of money for the man who owned her. And while Luke isn't too interested in details, and would be too squeamish to write about it anyway, I suspect this slave-girl like most slave-girls then and now also provided other services for her owner. But we don't like to talk about things like that.

This nameless slave-girl was here in the market-place of Philippi through which Paul and Silas and Luke and Timothy and other Christians had to pass to get to their local synagogue. They were staying nearby in Lydia's house, and the synagogue was just outside the city walls.

Over a period of days, as they pass by, the girl points them out to the crowd. And what she shouts about them is most curious. It's not hostile, there are no accusations that the townspeople need to beware of these Christians who are meeting together nearby. She, a slave herself, calls them slaves of God; slaves of the one Most High God whom the Jews worship, Yahweh, God. While I am a slave of a mere man, they are slaves to God himself, and they are here among us to preach the Way. *The Way of Salvation* was at that time an unofficial title for Christianity, which was so new and still taking shape that it had no official name, so the slave-girl had to identify them as 'slaves of the Most High God who proclaim this new philosophy called The Way of Salvation'.

But what she called them as they passed by each day isn't important; what matters is *why* she was doing this, which Luke wasn't that interested in. We are left to try to fill in the blanks with our own imagination. It's a mystery story for us to solve.

What I think is that she had heard something of their teaching, about freedom, about love, about equality between men and women, salvation and respect and tolerance and caring for each other. I think her daily calling after Paul and the others as they passed by was a cry for help, a cry for liberation. Not liberation from an evil spirit, but liberation from the reality of slavery and exploitation and ownership. I think Paul's ordering the *python spirit* to leave her in the name of Jesus was his invitation to come join the new and growing church in Philippi. The razzmatazz was there for the benefit of the gullible punters who would now deem her spoiled goods, incapable of telling their fortunes.

I would like to believe that she became a convert to the Way of Salvation, the Way of the Lord, part of that growing band of believers who believed in the truth about God as revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Maybe she too moved into Lydia's house working as a free servant. Or maybe her owner just beat her to death. We'll never know what really happened, but I'd prefer the happier ending.

What we do know is that having been around a while and not caused any ructions in the local community, Paul is suddenly in trouble. Everyone is just fine having Paul and Silas in town, preaching an interesting new religion, until they start to interfere with commercial trade. It's OK to waffle on about vague spiritual sorta things, but when religion starts meddling with something really important, like making money, then it appears that religion has gotten out of hand.

Of course loss of income is not the charge they trump up against Paul, but rather disturbing the peace and preaching un-Roman customs. They had been doing this for a while, it's only when commerce is affected that people get angry and agitated. But this was long ago, far away. These men are Jews; they are advocating customs it is not lawful for us Romans to accept. Long ago, far away.

These men are Christians; they are advocating customs it is not lawful for us in Devon to accept. Is that possible? Can we can advocate things unacceptable in our community? We preach the truth about the way of the Most High God. Sadly we have to preach this in a culture of greed which teaches us from birth that each of us is our own God. All of our outside influences, our media and culture teaches me that I am God in my world; there is no greater arbiter of right and wrong than my own desires. Me. What I want is paramount. And, I want it fast, I want it now. No matter the effect I may have on others, that's their problem, I am what is most important. And I deserve it, because I am worth it. Because I am God.

In our culture and society we are taught about freedoms, about choices, about our hi-tech sophisticated world. And, unlike those who still live in slavery, we do indeed have choices. When the chips are down, when it's crunch time, when we are faced with hard decisions, do we opt for the profit motive or for the promptings of the Holy Spirit and love and tolerance and community and salvation?

Paul lived in a time when slavery was an accepted part of society. Long ago, far away. Paul lived in a time when a vulnerable girl could be owned by a business-man who profited from her performances. Long ago far away.

Is it still possible to use human beings as mere sources of financial gain for their owners? It is possible, it happens around the world in many different ways. Sadly it happens in this country, slavery and the exploitation of the vulnerable. And as long as a child of God is used as productive property by others, religion in the name of Christ, should speak out, must make that choice between the profit motive or following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Church needs to be ready to disturb what the World calls peace in order to proclaim the truth of the Most High God.

Did our nameless slave-girl 2000 years ago find freedom and the Way of Salvation? She was a real person, Luke was there and he saw her. Did Lydia and Paul extend a hand to help lift her out of her situation, her exploitation? Or what...? How would you write the ending to this mystery story?