Sermons at All Saints Church, Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Canon Geoff Read on Sunday 4th October 2026

Theme: Is serving God just one more thing on my "to do" list?

Text: 1:3-14; John 15:1-5

Join me in a walk

If you look up you see the tallest church spire in England - Salisbury cathedral. Begun in 1220 it took just 38 years to build

If you look around you see water meadows - rushes, grass, cows and the river Avon

We are walking westwards, just two km to the village of Bemerton

Back in the year 1630 it was a small village with a church. And in in that year a new priest came to serve that village and nearby Fuggleston.

He was called George Herbert and sadly due to ill health he only lived another three years

But in that time he was a faithful pastor and prolific poet

His poems were all about our relationship with Jesus, taking the things of every day - the church building, a lock and key, and perhaps most famous about how Love is like a host at a meal, urging a guest to eat despite not feeling worthy - using these daily items to get us thinking about how relationship with Jesus is about all of life

He even spoke about how our relationship with Jesus can be like thick, full-fat cream





"And the cream of all my heart I will bring Thee …"

In his poem called Praise (II) that begins "King of glory, King of peace I will love Thee …", often sung as a hymn, one line says

"And the cream of all my heart I will bring Thee …"

What might that mean?

We are going to have two readings from the Bible now

Listen out for what that cream might be about

Readings from John 15:1-5, Ephesians 1:3-14

We live in a society that prizes effectiveness that is often expressed through work, earnings, talk of how busy we are as even a badge of honour

When we can't contribute in that way - age, unemployment, disability - we can feel excluded and wonder about our sense of self-worth

Here is Luxembourg we also are part of a Western mindset of faith that is often transactional - if I do this God will do that, God wants me to do this or that and then I will be acceptable to Him

Both effectiveness and seeing faith as a transaction means bringing cream is trying to bring my best, trying my hardest for God

Its very worthy, but serving Him can often end up feeling like another thing on my already full To-Do list

That's not what this cream is about

It's not about what we bring

It's about awakening to what God has already given us and then how we live life out of that creamy abundance!

In Paul's opening words in Ephesians he is very clear to say that he is talking about the way God has already blessed us

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing …

That in loving us into existence, and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus He has chosen us, adopted us, given our lives purpose and woven us in to all that He is doing in the world

Its summed up in vv7-8 - "the riches of His grace that He <u>has</u> lavished on us" - we already have all of that

(Read on into Paul's prayer in v15ff and he prays the Ephesian church will know "what is the hope to which he has called you", "what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints"- present tense, not future!)

This **is** the cream

And waking up to this, knowing this deep down inside is like realising that we can feast daily on rich, clotted cream!

Paul uses a phrase that he repeats again and again in our passage - "to the praise of His glory"

Glory is about how the things of heaven are experienced and glimpsed in the here and now

And what George Herbert means when he talks of "and the cream of all my heart I will bring Thee" is increasingly and consciously living life out of this rich awareness

Another thing you need to know is that in Christian thinking the heart is not about our emotions

Its about who we most deeply are - our deepest held passions and desires and then the choices that we make in pursuit of them

But here's the thing

Its God who put those desires there in the first place

And He put them there in you for a reason

By discovering them and rightly ordering them we are set free to love "to the praise of His glory" rather than just our own satisfaction

Which means we end up with this creamy life, even when the outer circumstances we face are challenging and may even seem hopeless





One of the tasks given to priests is what is called "the cure of souls" - we are like soul doctors for individuals and churches, called to diagnose and offer good medicine

And in my time here I have come to the diagnosis that All Saints is, at heart, a really good volunteering church

Its very common in churches

We see need, we respond out of compassion but also obligation, a sense of duty - something needs doing and so we pitch in

The problem with that is that as lives get busier or capacity shrinks

And so one of the things that I heard when I first came was "not another bloody rota"

The characteristics of churches that at heart are volunteering ones are that other priorities push in, disengagement, guilt, even resentment

That's true in our 24/7 lives as we get stretched at work, in home life

And its also true of how we belong to this community - one of my observations is that often people only come to church when they have a duty to do

Thank you! But I wonder if there might be something More Jesus wants for us

You could say that we end up feeling that we bring to God semi-skimmed and then fully skimmed lives rather than full-fat cream



Spiritual gifts
Heart/Passions
Abilities
Personality
Experience

During this month we are exploring in our sermons what this creamy way of living together might look like

And in the New Year everyone is invited to take part in a short three-session interactive course that many, many people in many, many churches have found very helpful

Its called the SHAPE course and it invites us to explore how God, in His wonderfully creamy way, has uniquely shaped us - as individuals and as a church

So we will help you identify and explore …

Your Spiritual gifts - the promise of the Bible is that every Christian is given one or more by the Holy Spirit

SHAPE will help you identify and explore Your heart's desire or passion - the things that really get you out of bed in the morning with a spring in your step!

Plus we will look at your Abilities, Personality and Experiences

and in a personal conversation think about how your SHAPE plays out in your life

Discovering these things set us free to serve in the world and the church out of passion and giftedness rather than just volunteer out of a general desire to help or eventually obligation

And so as Paul says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has (already) blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing!"

Let's discover and live life out of those blessings