

**St John of Bridlington, Healing
and Bad Salzuflen visitors (14.10.18)
Amos 5: 6, 7, 10 - 15; Mark 10: 17 - 31**

In addition to welcoming our visitors from Bridlington's twin town in Germany, Bad Salzuflen, there are two themes to this morning's service: it's a busy Sunday!

The first theme is the celebration of the Festival of St John of Bridlington. People who worship regularly at the Priory Church may be very familiar with St John. Anybody who is visiting, whether from Bad Salzuflen or elsewhere, will probably not have heard of him before. John is a real Saint; and he comes from Bridlington Priory! He was the last Englishman before the Reformation to be made a Saint by the Pope. That was in 1401.

Saint John's body was placed in a shrine in a chapel at *that*¹ end of the building in a part of the church is now demolished, in other words, beyond where that wall now is. Bridlington Priory was a monastery. But at the Reformation the monasteries were closed down and demolished. This monastery was demolished apart from the part of that church that we are now in. So this church was very, very big. We have just a little bit of it left. At the end of the service we shall walk to the place – which is now outside – where St John's shrine used to be.

Although St John is not very well known today, in the 1400s – the C15th – his fame and reputation was enormous. His shrine was an internationally renowned place of pilgrimage. When we go to the place of his shrine at the end of the service, we shall be maintaining that tradition.

¹ The East end

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

That is one theme of the service. The other theme is Healing. That's because St Luke's day is on Thursday of this week, the 18th October. And St Luke is thought to have been a medical doctor and therefore is often associated with healing. So we have a special service for healing today with the opportunity to be anointed with holy oil at the time that Communion is being administered. And, of course the legend of St John of Bridlington is full of healing miracles attributed to him both in his life time and through his intercession after he died.

The Bible readings today were not set as a celebration of St John of Bridlington. Everybody is using the same readings: only we, in Bridlington, are celebrating St John. But they couldn't have been better chosen: one is from St Mark's Gospel, all about the need for absolute commitment to God, putting following Jesus before any consideration of status or wealth; and the other is from the prophet Amos, all about social justice and concern for the vulnerable and needy. St John is a

perfect example of the combination of both of those things.

He was the leader of this monastery. But he refused to live in the comfortable Prior's lodgings which were on the other side of that wall². Instead he continued to sleep in a simple cell, like all the other members of the monastery, in the dormitory that ran just about on the line of my back garden wall.

Saint John had a special compassion and concern for the poor. One of my predecessors who wrote a book about him – it's available for sale in the Priory's gift shop – in that book he tells us: “[John] remitted the rents of poor tenants, maintained poor scholars out of the wealth of the monastery, and fed and clothed the poor.”³

² Western half of South wall

³ Wardle, J St John of Bridlington: his life and legacy [2013]

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

As we hear the words of today's Bible readings bouncing off the walls of the Priory church, as they have for 900 years, from the days of St John 650 years ago right to our own times, we hear an invitation and a challenge to combine an absolute commitment to God with passion for social justice. And as we hear that invitation and challenge we are inspired by our own St John whom we celebrate today.

Amen.