

24<sup>th</sup> June

### Memory verse

**While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.** Genesis 8:22

### Something to read

The Story of William Caxton<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about the early life of William Caxton, the first English printer and a man who spent much of his life in the service of literature. We do know, however, that on **June 24<sup>th</sup>** 1438, he became an apprentice in London to a wool or silk merchant and that three years later his master died, leaving William about £150 in his will. An apprentice is a young lad who is bound to a master by a legal agreement for a certain number of years in order to learn a trade. There are still apprentices today – perhaps you will be one yourself when you are older.

After his master's death William spent the next few years on the continent of Europe and became a prosperous merchant. It was not until 1472 that he learned all about the wonderful new craft of printing from the Germans who invented it.

Caxton's first printing press was set up in Bruges with the help of a friend who was a calligrapher (someone who does beautiful writing by hand) and an illuminator (illustrator) of manuscripts, but in 1476 he returned to England and started printing premises in the precincts of Westminster Abbey.

It was a slow job with the first printing presses but Caxton managed to print twenty different books in his first two years in England. He not only did the printing. He did other jobs which nowadays would be done by a publisher rather than a printer, editing and correcting the manuscripts (handwritten copies) before they were printed and even translating some books from French to be published and printed in English. Not only that but he sold the books himself as well.



One of his most famous productions was the printing of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. He later discovered that his first printing of Chaucer's poem had been made from an incorrect manuscript so he obtained a better manuscript and issued a new edition. *Aesop's Fables* was also among the books printed on his small and unwieldy press as well as a book about playing chess.

Before he died, in 1491, Caxton had printed over eighty different books, twenty-one of them being his own translations into English.

Printing with moveable type was invented in Europe, where Caxton learned to do it, and Johann Gutenberg (c.1400-1468) is generally given the credit. He was certainly one of the first to use it. At first he may have used wooden type but he was certainly using metal before long. To make metal type Gutenberg used long pieces of wood. He carved a letter on the end of each piece. The letter was backwards or in mirror image. Each stick then had to be pressed into a little square of clay to form a “matrix”. A wooden frame was fitted round each matrix



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today* Volume 2, available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

and molten lead was poured in and left to become hard. Gutenberg discovered that the best metal to use was a mixture of lead, tin and antimony. When the metal had cooled down and hardened the wooden frame was removed and there was a long block of metal with a mirror image letter standing out at one end. If you have rubber stamps of letters you will know roughly what it looked like. Then the letters had to be “composed” in a frame to make words, sentences and pages of type – all in mirror image. When the mirror image page was wiped with ink and pressed down on some paper, the image on the paper was the right way round.

### A story and a fable to read

One of the Canterbury Tales, the Knight's Tale, is included in today's Optional Resources Files. It is from *The Canterbury Pilgrims Being Chaucer's Canterbury Tales Retold for Children* by M. Sturt and E. C. Oakden.<sup>2</sup> Below is one of Aesop's fables. Both these books were first printed by Caxton.

### The Cock and the Jewel.<sup>3</sup>

A farmyard cockerel one day was scratching around on a rubbish heap, in the hope of finding some scattered grain for food, when he happened to scratch up a bright shining jewel. Not knowing what to do with it he turned away from it in scorn saying, “I would rather have one grain of tasty barley than all the jewels in the world.”

### Moral

People toil away and slave to get this world's goods and pleasures: they do not bother about food for their souls. The Bible is a pearl of great price, a great treasure and spiritual food, but it is scorned. Instead, people want only the passing things of the world, which can never satisfy the soul. Unless God touches their hearts, men will not listen when we tell them of the value of the Bible, but when God gives us grace, we see that there is nothing that can compare with it. “Thy statutes are dearer to me than gold and silver,” says David. Is it so with us? Do we love God's word?

### Some things to do

Today would be a good day to get out any rubber stamps you have and see what you can do with them. If you do not have rubber stamps you might like to do potato prints as we did in the lesson for April 6<sup>th</sup>. Have you ever tried writing in mirror image? It is quite tricky to do. Experiment with this week's memory verse and then hold it up to a mirror to see if you have managed to get it right. Can you imagine what it would be like to copy out a Bible by hand? The Bible is not allowed in many countries in the world. Radio broadcasts of the Bible at “dictation speed” (that is a speed slow enough for someone to write down the words as they are said) has often been used to help people in such places.<sup>4</sup> Try this for yourselves by having one person read slowly from the Bible and another person writing down the words.

### Something to think about

The invention of printing was a great blessing. The first book that Gutenberg printed was a Bible in about 1455. When the Reformers, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John



<sup>2</sup> Available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *Christian Fables or The Fables of Aesop and Other Writers Christianized and Adapted with Christian Morals for the Use of Young People* by the Rev. Samuel Lysons (London, 1850). Available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

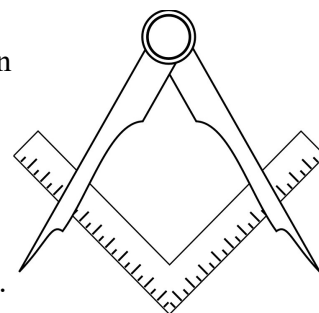
<sup>4</sup> You can see an example here: <https://febcintl.org/photos/picture.php?/1003>

Knox and others needed to publish the truth of God's Word, the art of printing was well developed and ready for them to use. Gutenberg's Bible was in Latin but printing went hand in hand with the new vernacular (in the language of the people) translations of the Bible to ensure that God's Word was known more widely than ever before.

Today printing makes it possible to make many copies of the Bible in many different languages far more quickly and cheaply than it could ever have been done by hand.<sup>5</sup> Subscribing to the work of the Trinitarian Bible society is one way of helping to spread the Word of God. We should pray for the work too.<sup>6</sup> How we should treasure our printed Bibles!

### Something to look out for

Have you ever seen this sign – perhaps on a building or gate? It is the sign known as the “square and compass” and it is the symbol of worldwide Freemasonry. Freemasons meet at a “lodge” – you will find one in most towns – and if you see a building with this sign on it you have found the local Freemason's lodge. There are 6,800 of these lodges in Britain. The oldest Freemason's lodge in the world is the Masonic grand lodge which was formed on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1717 at the Goose & Gridiron Tavern in London. But what is freemasonry all about?



Freemasonry was very popular in the eighteenth century and many influential figures from that period were Freemasons, Erasmus Darwin,<sup>7</sup> Josiah Wedgwood,<sup>8</sup> Thomas Chalmers,<sup>9</sup> Robert Burns<sup>10</sup> and George Washington among them. Freemasons describe themselves as members of a fraternal, or brotherly organisation who help one another and benefit society but there is far more to it than that. Freemasonry is, although Freemasons will often deny this, a religious organisation.

Freemasons will tell you that a man of any religion can become a Freemason. Freemasonry teaches that all people of religions are really worshipping the same God, The Grand Architecht of the Universe, but calling him by different names. But this belief itself is incompatible with believing the Bible. The Bible, for instance, teaches that Jesus alone is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Those who practice pagan religions are not, according to the Bible, worshipping the true God. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20)

Freemasonry teaches that man is like a rough cut stone. He is not sinful and in need of forgiveness but rough and in need of polishing. This we can achieve by means of “a virtuous education, our own endeavo[u]rs and the blessing of God.”<sup>11</sup>

Can you find where the Bible teaches that this is a wrong idea?<sup>12</sup>

5 Here: [https://vimeo.com/694418844?embedded=true&source=vimeo\\_logo&owner=126756754](https://vimeo.com/694418844?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=126756754) you can watch an exciting video of Bibles being printed.

6 You can see something of what is being done to distribute printed Bible today by looking at the TBS website <https://www.tbsbibles.org>. The exciting story of some very unusual printed Bibles can be read here: <http://www.tyndale.org/tsj05/cooper.html>.

7 See lesson for April 8<sup>th</sup>.

8 See lesson for 13<sup>th</sup> July.

9 See lesson for 17<sup>th</sup> March.

10 See lesson for 25<sup>th</sup> January.

11 Deputy Grand Master R. W. Donald Gardner Hicks, Jr as quoted <https://www.gotquestions.org/free-masonry.html>

12 An example would be: Romans 3:20-26.