

4<sup>th</sup> October

**Memory Verse**

**Thy word have I hid in my heart** that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119:11  
Little ones can learn the words in bold and understand that “Thy” means “your” and stands for “God's” in this verse and “hid” is short for “hidden”. When we memorise Bible verses we are helping to hide God's Word in our heart.

**Something to look at**



The painting on the previous page is one which some people think is the greatest picture ever painted.<sup>1</sup> The artist is Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, or Rembrandt for short (1606 – 1669). Rembrandt was such a good painter, that many of his pictures make people feel as if they are taking part in what is happening. He died on 4<sup>th</sup> October and this picture was painted right at the end of his life. The picture is a scene from one of the parables that Jesus told. I expect you can guess that it is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Read the account for yourself in Luke chapter 15:11–32.

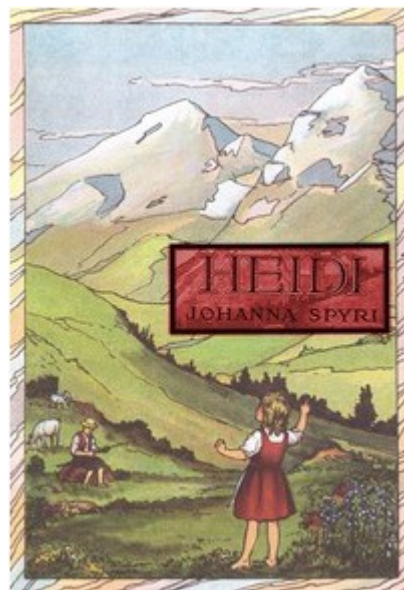
Paintings by Rembrandt can be seen in art galleries all over the world. This one is now in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia. Throughout his work Rembrandt used colours which get darker nearer the edge of the painting. The centre of the painting is lighter. Here in the lighter area Rembrandt places the person or group of people that make up the subject of the painting and they are always brighter than the rest of the picture. You can see that he has used this technique here. But as you look at the painting, do not ignore the background. Rembrandt fills the backgrounds with interesting details and this is the case with this picture too. There is rich carved work round what seems to be a doorway that tells us about the wealth of the household, for instance.

In this painting we can recognise at once the kind father and the prodigal son in the picture but who are the other people? On the right stands the elder son in the story. Study his face. What do you think he is thinking? Further back in the shadows a man in a large hat is sitting. If you look carefully you will see that he seems to have some clothing on his lap. Perhaps he is the servant who has been sent to fetch the robe and the ring and he is waiting to help the young man into his clean clothes. There is another servant too standing in the shadows. Has he come to report that the fatted calf is being prepared? In the deepest shadows is another person. This is part of the detail in the background that we mentioned earlier. Can you see her? She is on the left. Some people think it is the Prodigal's mother, although Jesus does not mention her in the parable.

The prodigal is wearing patched and ragged clothes that look as if they have once been fine robes. There is no colour left in them and their dirty white contrasts with the rich red robes of the father and the elder son. We can tell the prodigal has come from a far country because his wooden shoes have worn out. The heel of the shoe on the right has quite worn away and the shoe on the left has fallen off, revealing a rough and travel-worn foot. One thing many people have noticed in this picture is the difference between the two hands of the father. The right hand is a little lighter in colour than the left and has long, thin, gentle fingers. The left hand is broad and strong. In the parable the father represents God. Many people think that Rembrandt was trying to tell us that God cares for his children like a mother (Isaiah 49:15 and Matthew 23:37) and also like a father.

### Something to read

The parable of the prodigal son plays a central role in the famous children's story *Heidi* by Joanna Spyri. Be sure to get a good translation,<sup>2</sup> not an abridgement of this enchanting book. It is excellent to read aloud or for children to read themselves. (Don't watch a film version either. All the subtleties and Christian content get pushed out in a film.)



1 “...a picture which those who have seen the original in Leningrad may be forgiven for claiming as the greatest picture ever painted.” Clark, Kenneth *An Introduction to Rembrandt* (London, 1989) p. 137

2 <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/46409/pg46409.txt> for example.

### Something to draw

We saw that the hands were an important part of Rembrandt's picture. Younger children might like to draw round their own or each other's hands or make hand prints in coloured paint.

Older children can draw their own hand. Here is a method that might be interesting to try:

Tape your paper to the table so that it won't slip around.

Arrange your left hand (right if you are left-handed) in a comfortable position and support it. You will need some support because this drawing will take you about half an hour and your hand must stay still during this time.

Do not move or tilt your head in order to see part of your hand that may be hidden from view.

Relax and look at your hand intently.

Pick a place on the edge or contour of your hand. Let your eyes move slowly along the contour. And at the same time move the pencil on the paper at the same slow speed.

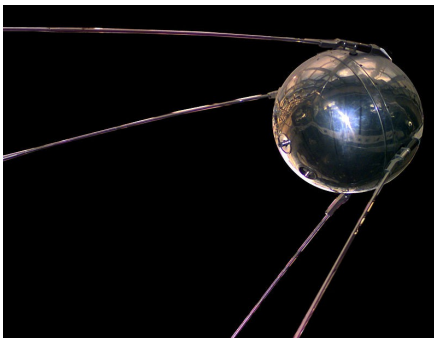
Glance at the paper to check from time to time but do most of the drawing while looking at your hand.

I was quite pleased with the results of my attempt at this on the right and I'm sure you can do even better.



### Something to read from science history<sup>3</sup>

A new era in the history of the world began on **October 4<sup>th</sup>** 1957, with the successful launching of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik I, by the Russians. This was a polished metal sphere, about the size of two footballs and weighing about 83 kilograms. You can see a replica in the picture. Sputnik was launched from the cosmodrome at Leninsk (now known as the Baikonur Cosmodrome) using Inter-continental Ballistic Missile technology.



When it began its orbits, people all over the world realized that spaceships carrying human being were now possible.

Travelling at a speed of about 18,000 miles per hour, Sputnik I took 96 minutes to circle the globe, and remained in orbit for three months.

The success of Sputnik triggered anxiety in the nations of the west. It certainly looked as if the communist Soviet Union was ahead of the democratic United States of America in technology. Sputnik was the stimulus that led the Americans to create NASA and their own space programme. The successful use of Inter-continental Ballistic Missile technology by the Russians was very worrying. Inter-continental Ballistic Missiles were intended to be fired, as their name suggests, across from one continent to another and they were specifically designed to carry nuclear weapons. If the Russians could launch Sputnik into orbit they could presumably fire a nuclear weapon at the USA. This fuelled a drive in the USA to improve science education in order to counter the threat. The Space Race began in earnest, leading to the first man launched in space<sup>4</sup> and then the moon landings in 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 3 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

<sup>4</sup> See the lesson for April 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Something to do

The return of London Stone to its historic location in the City of London was marked by an unveiling ceremony performed by the Lord Mayor of London on 4th October 2018. The stone had had a temporary home in the Museum of London while building work was being carried out. On the right is a section of a picture-map from the 1550's. Can you see where the stone once stood? You will see the name of the street if you look at the far right hand end.<sup>5</sup> But what *is* London



Stone? It is an insignificant-looking lump of limestone that is one of the oldest things in London! The stone has a history that reaches back to Roman times and possibly earlier. The plaque beside it explains:

[This is t]he remaining part of London Stone, which once stood in the middle of Cannon Street, slightly west of its present location. Its original purpose is unknown, although it may be Roman and related to Roman buildings that lay to the south. It was already called 'London Stone' in the 12th century and became an important city landmark. In 1450 Jack Cade, leader of the rebellion against the corrupt government of Henry VI, struck it with his sword and claimed to be Lord of London.

In 1742, London Stone was moved to the north side of the street and eventually set in an alcove in the wall of St. Swithin's church on this site.

The church was bombed in the Second World War and demolished in 1961–2, and London Stone was incorporated into a new office building on the site. Following redevelopment it was placed in its present location in 2018.

It is not just cities that have their most ancient objects. Every house has something in it or some part of it that is the oldest. Have a think. What is the oldest object in your house or garden? It may be quite a difficult question to decide. When you have identified it you could draw it or write something about it. You could make an entry in your diary or journal about it. How much do you know about it? Who might have made it (or planted it – it could be a tree!) and how does it come to be where it is now?

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5 Cannon Street.