

Greenway's Benefice Weekly Reflection (No. 14)

Sunday 21st June 2020

Encountering God as the Body of Christ

Bible Readings:

John 6:1-14, 35 & 40 Luke 17:20-21 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

How have you been coping with lockdown? It seems a long time since life was "normal", and I guess we all have our own individual experiences, challenges and fears.

We live in strange times – a situation unlike anything our world has seen before. But amid all the fears and chaos that has swept through our society, there have been those little glimpses of light and hope – amazing things that people have done as acts of sheer human kindness.

Think of Captain (as he was) Tom Moore – what started as a small vision to raise £1000 for the NHS to celebrate his 100th birthday, ended up with a total of almost £33 million!

Or 6 year old Frank Mills from Bristol, who has spina bifida, setting out to raise £99 for "NHS Charities Together" – his total is now approaching £300,000!

The Coronavirus crisis has challenged unlikely people to do amazing things! Countless numbers of people have undertaken totally selfless acts, sometimes with unexpected results.

Our Bible reading from John's gospel, chapter 6 is the familiar account of Jesus feeding the five thousand – I'm sure we all know it well.

One of the key characters in that incident is the young boy who gave all he had to Jesus when he saw the crisis of those thousands of hungry people.

He could have kept his lunch to himself – but he didn't! He could have thought, "What I've got is so inadequate in this situation, so I'll just keep quiet and let the moment pass".

But he didn't! Like Tom Moore and Frank Mills, he offered what he had, regardless of how trivial it might have seemed.

And he made a big discovery - *When we place what we have into the hands of Jesus, there is no limit to what God can do!*

So much of this story reflects our Church life – and our Christian witness in the wider world! God has given us a mission to take the news of God's kingdom and the love and hope of Jesus to the world and to our society.

In the world around, so many people's lives are empty – hungry for peace, hope, meaning and reality – which can only be found in Jesus!

Later in our reading, in John 6:35, Jesus said *"I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never go hungry, and those who believe in me will never be thirsty."* This is our mission - to share with those around us the good news that Jesus can bring hope in every situation.

As Jesus received that boy's meagre offering, it was transformed into something that could satisfy all those needy people! But Jesus needed helpers! That food had to be passed on to thousands of people – and Jesus was just one man! Other helpers were needed!

Have you ever thought of yourself as being hands and feet for Jesus? It's as true today as it was then! The work of God's kingdom goes on through people like us. As Jesus said in Luke 17:21, *The Kingdom of God is within you.*

The Kingdom of God on earth is all about God working through us! In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Paul reminds his readers that God equips us with His gifts and abilities, and we are called to be the Body of Christ – a powerful description of the visible presence of Jesus in our broken world.

“Being Church” is not just about meeting up on a Sunday morning, although meeting together is important to support and encourage each other, and is something we are all sadly missing at the moment. All the “digital wizardry” in the world is no real substitute for being able to meet face-to-face, or even give one another a big hug!

Hopefully that day will come again – but in the meantime let’s use the God-given gifts and opportunities we have to reach others with the love of Jesus and be hands and feet and voices for Jesus in our own situations.

Whether it’s helping people to worship God and learn from the Bible, providing food for a hungry person, or simply a friendly phone call to someone who’s lonely and shut-in – there are opportunities for ALL God’s children to share in the work of His Kingdom.

It all comes down to this - how much we are willing to give of ourselves to God? The boy in the story gave his food. He emptied his basket into Jesus’ hands, and held nothing back. Can you really imagine his life ever being the same afterwards? Surely once you’ve seen Jesus work a miracle with your tiny offering, wouldn’t you be hungry for more?

That same offer is available to us - to place what we have into Jesus’ hands, and watch Him work wonders with our offering. All we have to do is be willing to say “Yes” to Jesus and look for the needs around us.

And when we offer ourselves to God in willing service – we never lose out! There were 12 disciples who helped pass on the food – and 12 baskets full left over! God provided enough for the workers to each have a doggy bag to take home! You never lose out when you give to God!

We can probably all relate to the boy in the story – aware that what we have is no match for the needs around us. But the most significant thing about the boy’s offering was not the quantity - it was the fact that he kept nothing back for himself and offered all he had to Jesus.

One of my favourite Graham Kendrick songs contains this verse:

*Though we are weak, His grace is everything we need;
We’re made of clay, but this treasure is within.
He turns our weaknesses into His opportunities,
So that the glory goes to Him!*

Remember - God is not looking for heroes - just willing servants!

Let’s share together this prayer as we remember both our own needs and the needs of the world around us...

Generous Lord, we thank you that you are able to take all that we offer to you and then multiply it for good. May we be willing today to give you our whole selves, so that You can make us channels of love, hope and peace in the communities and situations in which you have placed us.

And may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.

God bless

Dave Kilmister