

Bennochy church 10th September 2017

This morning we dipped in and out of Luke's gospel. Little 'snippets' of a much larger story. Sometimes we forget that scripture tells us stories, and it these stories that speak to us about God and his relationship with Israel and the life of Jesus and the early church. We tell stories to try and make sense of the world around us. The gospel writers are trying to make sense of who Jesus is, and then share that revelation of God with the ancient world. We now 'listen in' to these same stories, and ask the spirit of God to make them once again new in our lives. For these stories are not history, they are living words, with divine energy beyond the time they were written. The question is, how do we make them real today in the way we live, and share these stories with others.

These little 'snippets' are all connected. There is a thread that runs through, linking them together and it has to do with the *'rhythm of life'*.

One of the problem Jesus had, was that he attracted people to him. Because of his words and for many, his actions, news spread about this man from Nazareth. You can imagine the synagogues, packed to hear the great preacher of the day. You are going to want to come and see the miracle worker! If you are ill, diseased in any way, you will want to feel the touch of his hand and be healed. Jesus is the closest thing there was to a 1st century celebrity! News travelled fast.

People were doing just what people, like you and I, would do. It was natural reaction. Instinctive. People were not doing anything wrong, but as a result of what Jesus was doing, wherever he went, crowds gathered around him. You can almost feel the claustrophobia of the crowd pressing in. And in the midst of the crowd, You can feel his compassion, *"he placed his hands on every one of them and healed them all"*.

The demand was constant. Jesus felt overwhelmed at what the crowds were asking him to do, and he just needed to get away. He even tried saying to some people, 'don't tell anyone what's happened', but that seemed to make no difference

We can feel overwhelmed, especially in those moments, where lots of things seem to come to crisis point or there are lots of decisions that have to be made, all at once. We might have coped with each individual circumstance, but put them all together, we then want to say; *stop the world, I want to get off!* What do we do in those moments, where there seems to be no rhythm or balance to life? We are out of kilter. Life seems out of control. We can't step out of life. So how do try to gain a sense of, not control, but perspective, over what is happening to us.

In the stories of Jesus, he took time out. He stepped away into a quiet place to pray. My question is this, how do we find the 'God centred' "quiet places" in our lives, in those times of turmoil?

When we are feeling at our lowest ebb, when for others, life just goes on, not looking in on our pain. We might want to say, *look what is happening to me*, but no one seems to be listening?

We can't stop the world, but are there places of spiritual solitude that, even for a brief moment, we can escape to. Jesus went to lonely places. I believe we can do that, even in the midst of crowds. It is not to escape to isolation, but into the presence of God. Jesus retreated to such places, to escape the physical demands placed upon him, and to recharge the spiritual soul. We need time in such places, and for us, these places will be vastly different. What makes us tick and be refreshed, is unique.

You cannot get two more different characters than Martha and Mary. There is a spectrum between these two woman and all of us are on that spectrum. You might be nearer Martha, to be found in the place of work. You are getting on with the practical things, because they need to be done. Or do you have a bit of Mary in you? You are in listening mode at the feet of God.

The point is, time here is short. This might well be the last time. The last opportunity, for these two women to listen to Jesus. What are you going to? Jesus, in the nicest possible way, says to Martha, don't waste your time in the kitchen. Focus on that which is now, never to be repeated and which cannot ever be taken away. It is a story about the rhythm and balance of life. Peoples priorities. What gives it a cutting edge, is the context.

Jesus will not be around much longer. priority is not the place of work, but to be in the presence of God.

Part of our stewardship, what we give back to God is our time, and depending on what is happening, there will be moments of great activity, time almost crowding us out, and then there will be those moments, times, when we take that step back to the 'lonely' place, to hear more clearly, about the noise of the world, the voice of Jesus. If we are people of 'work', then God may have to gently pull us into such quiet places.

In their journey through the desert, for 40 years, the people of God had times on the move, and moments of rest. God is saying to us, that is the rhythm of life. Our hearts beating to the pace of God. For, *come follow me*, is both a call to be part of the crowds and to journey, to the lonely places. Amen.