

26th June 2022

Revd Geoff Gleed

Luke 13 vv10-21 "Walking together with God"

My message today is very simple : "Do your little bit of good where you are. It's the little bits of good , when put together, that can overwhelm the world"

If you have been reading or discovering anything about the life and time of the late Arch-bishop Desmond Tutu, you'll know that those words come from him.

Our minister Robert uses those words on his email messages and you will have seen them printed at the top of our Weekly News sheets at various times... to be honest I could stop at this point because the message of each of us doing 'our bit' is what life and our faith in Jesus is all about....but I am sorry, there are just a few other things I'd like to add which might help our thinking before I finish.

You are all well aware of the elements that are needed to make up the Christian life and LOVE is at the top of the list but there are so many others used by Jesus, Paul, James and others which add to the mixture but the crucial message I want us to take on board today is that WORDS mean NOTHING unless we live them out...not just in church but in our community...in our daily lives.

I recently started to read a little booklet entitled "The Great Divide" where Mark Greene writes this:

"The great divide for many Christians is the belief that some parts of their life are "sacred" and really important to God - such as prayer, Sunday worship, church-based activities - but that others are "secular" and irrelevant to God - such as work, school, university, sport, the arts, music, rest, sleep, hobbies and holidays"

He thinks that such a belief distorts God's character and severely limits our understanding of OUR role in God's purposes for us and his world. Mark Greene believes that it's because of the "Sacred"/ "secular" divide in our lives that study after study reveal why the vast majority of Christians do not feel equipped for MISSION in their daily lives - where they spend most of their time.

So where do you stand in this? Do you agree with him? because he poses the question "Imagine how things might be if all God's people, children, teenagers, workers, parents, carers, volunteers, unemployed, and retired "re-imagined" their mission - where we could naturally without fear or embarrassment , engage with people about faith, about Jesus, about God "

You see, there is a massive difference between knowing something in your head and living it out in your everyday life. For centuries people attended worship - it was expected even demanded by authorities and many attended through fear of how they might be punished by God if they failed to attend but many who attended worship - especially landowners and 'upper classes' - those in power - then failed to live out their faith in the community: they did their duty to God on a Sunday but lived as they wanted for the rest of the week. The leaders of the Synagogue in the story we heard, were not at all happy about Jesus healing on the sabbath. They were, in worship, doing the right thing in their eyes...and here was Jesus doing the wrong thing - "Rules is rules... and you've

broken them Jesus". But Jesus says in effect, "The time is always right to do the right thing" - a quote that you will find on many church notice boards including our own!

Of course this is Jesus we are talking about and we can all say (and do so often I am sure) "It's not so easy these days, besides Jesus had all the answers and I don't" - WRONG oh so wrong friends!

Jesus explains about the healing the crippled woman as part of God's will to bring the Kingdom but goes on to say that the Kingdom WILL be brought about by small steps... it will be the little acts we perform - yes no bigger than a mustard seed which can held - just as the yeast in the dough.

You see, there is no such thing as an "ordinary day" for us Christians - because with Jesus every day, every task, every situation, every relationship is brimful with possibilities- Jesus never missed an opportunity to make known God's purposes and nor must we!

Over the past 30 years or so, numbers attending regular worship in the UK has plummeted - and with covid the decline is even more marked and it can sound defeatist if we say "so what hope is there?" "Why bother anymore?" But Jesus works through every part of life - not just for an hour on a small sort of places on all sorts of occasions. The key is to remember that every aspect of life is valuable to God.

I am aware that many of you reading this do much to help others enjoy a better life but I would like to end by sharing a story that may help you in your thinking;

Two men were both seriously ill and shared the same room in a hospital. There was only one window looking out on to the world, and one of the men next to the window was allowed to sit up for an hour each afternoon while the other was obliged to spend his time lying flat on his back. Each afternoon the man next to the window would spend his hour describing the scene he saw - the parkland outside with its lake, the ducks and swans there and children taking great [pleasure in feeding the birds or playing with model boats, young lovers walking hand in hand beneath leafy trees and of course the glorious colours of flowers coming in to bloom.

The man lying flat on his back would listen and enjoyed every moment of the description - he could almost see what was happening so vivid was the scene that was being painted.

Then the day came when the man by the window was moved on and so the other asked if he could be moved to the bed by the window where perhaps he might too get a glimpse of the lovely scene. Although it was painful he managed to prop himself on an elbow and loom out - expecting to see for himself all that his fellow patient had described. But the window faced a blank brick wall!

In our lives too we can choose to see blank brick walls or opportunities: like the man who chose to look beyond and enhance the life of others. We can think our lives are irrelevant to God, to our faith or we can recognise that every part of our life can be lived for God and with God.

Well friends I suspect that you've heard it all before - there is nothing new under the sun but God has always wanted us to play our part in helping to build up the Kingdom of Justice and Righteousness, of Love and Hope and all those things that make for the good of his people and his creation and has a purpose which you can use for the greater good - whether you have faith'

strong enough to move mountains' or if you are just a mustard seed that will ultimately grow to give shade and shelter to those who need to know that they too are loved and valued by God.

Amen