

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
29th September 2020

READINGS

This is what the Lord God says: I, myself, will search for my sheep and take care of them. As a shepherd takes care of his scattered flock when it is found, I will take care of my sheep. I will save them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries. I will bring them to their own land and pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the places where people live in the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and they will eat grass on the high mountains of Israel. They will lie down on good ground where they eat grass, and they will eat in rich grassland on the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock and lead them to rest, says the Lord God. I will search for the lost, bring back those that strayed away, put bandages on those that were hurt, and make the weak strong.

Ezekiel 34: 11-16

I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house. I was without clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

'Then the good people will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you alone and away from home and invite you into our house? When did we see you without clothes and give you something to wear? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?'

'Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'

Matthew 25:35-40

Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.

Henri Nouwen



REFLECTION

One of my favourite stories (which I am sure I may have shared with folk before!) is the story of the man out for a walk along the beach one morning. As he strides along the sand he comes across a dreadful sight. Hundreds of star fish have washed up on the beach and are dying. In the midst are a family picking up the starfish and placing them back in the water. The man looks at them and sees them each take one starfish, place it in the water and see it swim away. Dumbfounded he says to the family, "You are wasting your time, there are literally hundreds of starfish, you can't possibly make a difference. You can't possibly save them all" And the son in the family picks up a star fish and carries it to the sea, places it in the water and says "Well I made a difference for that one". After pausing for a second, the man reaches down and picks up a starfish, carries it to the sea and sees it swim away and then he goes back for another...

As we enter renewed restrictions following the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, many people are feeling worried again. Already the panic buying that marked the start of the first lockdown has begun. I have spoken with folk who are really upset that the freedoms they had recently regained are now under threat again. Added to that are the worries about loved ones and neighbours and friends. Faced with such a negative time, each of us might wonder what we can do. The problems before us seem so vast, the worries and the fear so great, how on earth will we cope? And for Church folk we might be asking, "How on earth can we live out our Christian calling in such a world as this?".

I take great comfort from our readings today. For they remind us that we CAN make a difference. Just like the family in the story of the starfish, our actions, our simple ordinary everyday actions can make a difference. As Henri Nouwen says, "I must trust that the little bit of love I sow now will bear many fruits". We worship and follow the God who does not desert us, but rather seeks out and cares for his people. And our kindnesses to those around us. Our generosity expressed to others, our worlds of welcome, of care, of comfort, make all the difference in the world when they help just one person. And by those same simple actions we point toward that incredible love of God

Ask then, who can you help today?

PRAYER

Generous God,
Loving shepherd,
God who never leaves us on our own,
God who never forgets us.
In this time of growing Covid-19 infection numbers,
Of tighter lockdown restrictions
Of worry and concern,
We reach out for you,
Like children reaching for the reassuring hand of a loving parent.
Bring to us your peace,
Grow in us that sense that we are not alone, we are not without aid and support,
For we are your people,
Part of your holy family,
And you are with us.

And help us not to turn away from the fears of others,
Help us to not hide from the need around us.
Rather use what we can offer,
Our words and our actions,
Our kindness and our friendship,
Our hope in you,
To bring comfort and grow peace
To make a difference in the most simple and practical ways,
To help,
To sow hope.

In Jesus name we pray
Amen

