



WESTERN FELLS CIRCUIT

495

WRITTEN SERVICE [Ord 14] 4 July 2021 2021 by Keith Rushton.

[It will be good if your bible is handy, but not essential]

Our call to worship...

God's grace is lavished upon us and His power is made perfect in our weakness.

Hymn 97 [StF] [Joseph Addison]

When all your mercies, O My God, my rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost in wonder, love and praise.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts my daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart that tastes those gifts with joy.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, you are really with us. We earnestly and silently make our confessions... Let us hear you say "your sins are forgiven". We are full of gratitude now because even in times of isolation we catch glimpses of your blessing and we know that you are looking after us. In this moment, we are spiritually united with you and our friends. Please be our refreshment now as we worship, in the name of Jesus. Amen. PAUSE..... THE LORD'S PRAYER

NOW WE CONSIDER A NUMBER OF POINTS FROM THREE SCRIPTURES IN TODAY'S LECTIONARY AND SUMMARISED HERE. [Ezekiel chapter 2 and reading to verse 4 in chap 3; Mark 6 verses 6 to 13 and 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 to10]

Ezekiel chapter 2 records a vision of a call to a preaching ministry in amazing picture language. The drama starts from a position of doom and lament but things change because Ezekiel faces up to obeying God's call. What initially seemed horrendous, turned out to be as sweet as honey.

Then, in the Gospel as recorded by Mark in chapter 6 we note that Jesus had just had a hard time in his home town where those who had known him since he was a youngster had taken offence at his teaching. They simply couldn't credit him with enough wisdom. He was amazed at their lack of faith. But his work did not come to a standstill, he moved on and expanded his Ministry by sending out six teams of Disciples two by two on mission.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 from verse 7 we have a very visionary St Paul recording how his life was a struggle with "the thorn in his flesh" and yet he declares he could cope with all difficulty because the Lord gave him these words; "My grace is sufficient for you.....my power is made perfect in weakness."

First let us put ourselves in Ezekiel's shoes. His call was to minister to an obstinate and stubborn people but, said the Lord, "don't be afraid."

Then there is that out of this world imagery of Ezekiel being given a scroll to eat. It was like as if God needed him to digest the seriousness of the situation. The writing was about lament, mourning and woe. But Ezekiel took the risk and committed himself to an almost impossible task. The feeling of doom was followed by hope. Saying yes to God was like tasting honey.

Let us now think about Mark 6 where we hear of Jesus coming back to his home town, only to be ignored. And it is even worse than that, there were folk in the crowd who set out to deflate him and trash his message. "He is only a carpenter's son and yet he thinks he is wise enough to teach us. How can he possibly be God's messenger it seems only five minutes since he was a schoolboy." The same story in Luke's Gospel has Jesus using Isaiah 61 as his manifesto. And Luke tells us that these folk, some of whom at one time would have counted Jesus as a neighbourhood friend, threw him out of the town.

Jesus must have been hurt. His programme for that week didn't work to plan but he pressed on regardless. It is so impressive the way he swung his team right back into action. He sent the disciples out on mission in twos to preach the good news and serve the people. They had to go without a bag or a spare coat, no i-phone, no money or packed lunch.

How does this relate to us? First of all, don't let your discipleship come to a standstill when things are difficult. Our mission and service is all about you and I meeting people where they are. It is about listening to their stories, their questions and their pain.

If we are ignored, it is not new. Jesus was rejected in his home town but he was not derailed. He quickly decided to crack on with the missionary task. He commissioned those two-by-two mission teams to go out without any fancy equipment and they were successful.

I can hear you saying "I simply cannot do that kind of stuff because I don't have the right gifts. I am too weak in all sorts of ways." I certainly used to say that of myself before I was ordained exactly 30 years ago. Last Sunday I was privileged to take part in the Ordination of a Priest for our local Anglican team when the Bishop challenged each member of the congregation present to ask themselves whether perhaps God was calling them to a new work within the mission of the church and community. I want to reiterate that call.

How does it work when we feel inadequate?

When Paul disclosed his vulnerability in today's Epistle, he remembered getting encouragement directly from Jesus. "THE LORD SAYS MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT" Isn't that wonderful? Jesus is saying that to you right now. "My grace is sufficient."

And Paul says "FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST I DELIGHT IN WEAKNESS – FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG"

And by the way, if you can't sleep tonight, don't count sheep, call the Shepherd. AMEN

Hymn 482 [StF] [Brian Foley]

Here is no moment of my life, no place where I may go,
No action which God does not see, no thought God does not know.

God knew my days before all days, before I came to be;
And keeps me, loves me, in my ways, through all eternity.

Now please take a few minutes for silent reflection.

[2]

Let us pray.

Loving God, we seek healing for our nation and the world. We lift up to you, all people laid low by the virus, tired doctors, nurses and carers. We give thanks for the development and delivery of vaccines. We pray for school students and teachers having their courses disrupted by isolation issues. Bless all our loved ones for whom we have concerns. We pray for the many who have worries about employment and income.

We pray O Lord for your church throughout this land. There are points of disagreement within different groups of people within Methodism just now. We pray for your grace to infuse differences. Enable us all to keep our hand on the plough.

Give comfort to the lonely and peace to troubled hearts. Give us all confidence for the future. Touch our lives now O Lord. Empower us to actually BE the light at the end of the tunnel and have faith beyond the scope of the faith we have had so far in our lives. We pray for the light of the gospel to shine across the world as never before. May we all exercise our discipleship with confidence O Lord. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on all of us.

The Lord Bless you and all your loved ones, keep you safe and give you peace today and always. Amen.