



Lent 2  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>  
Feb 2021

We are challenged to allow Jesus to disrupt our lives.

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and **by following in his Way come to share in his glory;** through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Romans 4.13-25      Mark 8.31-38

*If you are sitting comfortably then we'll begin* are words repeatedly used by storytellers such as Listen With Mother. The words imply that to listen we need to be comfortable... which is true to some extent. Psychologists tell us that when voices reach a certain level we cannot hear other people due to our stress responses. The discomfort of the volume shuts our rational hearing down.

Today we grapple with the question of disruption and discomfort. Jesus' words to his disciples cause extreme discomfort. Jesus who has already told the disciples that he is the Messiah, the anointed king through which he will deliver God's people. The disciples will interpret this as earthly glory- they have already seen crowds gather around Jesus, they have already seen Jesus being tested by local leaders and winning the debates. Peter is taken aside by Jesus who speaks plainly that he will be rejected, suffer and lose his life. This totally disrupts Peter's understanding.

The whole of the gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as A DISRUPTOR (for example chapter 2 v 15-17, 23-28, chapter 3 v 1-6, chapter 7 v 1-23 I am sure you can think of other examples!)

Jesus' debates and teachings about faith are spoken with authority, humour and great discussion that reveal uncomfortable truths about social and religious practices. Jesus prioritises sinners, outcasts, the sick. His commitment means he will not dial down his ministry to spare his own life, or even to ease his suffering. His commitment to the healing of humanity literally knows no limits. *Jesus dies because powerful humans oppose both his healing mission and, more specifically, the disruption that mission brings to established law and order. Unbeknownst to Jesus' opponents, they are opposing the in-breaking reign "kingdom" of God. (Ira Driggers)*

When we focus purely on Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin (the atonement theory advocated in later interpretations of Jesus death especially in the book of Romans) we can miss out on the wider fact that Jesus dies because he disrupts social norms, he disrupts religious norms and he disrupts political norms. For the gospel of Mark, discipleship is not comfortable affiliation with Jesus but a life-changing and potentially life-threatening commitment to living his way.

This is a challenge to us. We, like Peter, ask Jesus 'Really? Can't you just tone it down a bit so you can stay safe? Isn't your life-giving message about safety in your love...' Jesus replies 'No. To follow me is a commitment to the unruly, the chaotic edge with wise words and sure actions. God does not 'tone down' his ministry through me in order to spare my life.' Hard words to hear. Even harder to consider for our own lives.

Finley Peter Dunne (1867-1936) coined the phrase spoken of Jesus: He came to "*comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.*" You may like to reflect on the following

- Are you uncomfortable? Do you think God might be behind it? What do you think God might be trying to get across to you?
- Does following Jesus disrupt my life? Should it? How?
- What is stopping me from being more courageous in my words and actions? Are these reasons valid when I consider the times we are living in and pray about them?

Revd Becky

## HYMN REFLECTION (LENT 2)

On August 30th last year we had a Reflection on the hymn *Take up thy cross*. One of the really great hymns, based on today's Gospel. If you still have it on your computer, or can read it in a hymn book, please do as Becky once suggested - read it over, slowly, as a prayer; pray it. Rather than repeat it, I take this opportunity to introduce a new hymn which is also concerned with our personal involvement in the story of Christ's Passion. Of all the new hymns I have introduced to you, this is the one which I would most dearly like to see find a firm place in the repertoire before I die. In the meeting I held in 2018 to try out 14 new hymns, this was voted a close second to Adam Carlill's 23rd Psalm.

This is what Chris Idle, the author, writes about it himself: "The opening lines grew from seeing our Lord's prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, described in the first three gospels, in the light of John XVII, 20. The text weaves around the "tree" theme found in many scriptures about the Cross, including the earliest Christian preaching and teaching. Paul Wigmore was looking for new words to a traditional Scottish tune as well as for new hymns about the Cross. Opinions have varied on whether they match here ..... it became my first to appear in any A & M publication".

The tune concerned was *Kelvingrove (Will you come and walk)*. John Barnard has now written a more suitable tune, *Widford* - absolutely lovely, with some strange, lonely, chords, nothing difficult, especially as it is essentially slow. It is a modern masterpiece. Type Widford into Google, and then scroll down to Jubilate Hymns

When you prayed beneath the trees, it was for me, O Lord;  
when you cried upon your knees, how could it be, O Lord?  
When in blood and sweat and tears  
you dismissed your final fears,  
when you faced the soldiers' spears, you stood for me, O Lord.

When their triumph looked complete, it was for me, O Lord;  
when it seemed like your defeat, they could not see, O Lord.  
When you faced the mob alone  
you were silent as a stone,  
and a tree became your throne; you came for me, O Lord.

When you stumbled up the road, you walked for me, O Lord;  
when you took your deadly load, that heavy tree, O Lord,  
when they lifted you on high  
and they nailed you up to die,  
and when darkness filled the sky, it was for me, O Lord.

When you spoke with kingly power, it was for me, O Lord;  
in that dread and destined hour you made me free, O Lord.  
Earth and heaven heard you shout;  
death and hell were put to rout,  
for the grave could not hold out; you are for me, O Lord.

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