

Rev Tim Perkins
Oct 7th 2020

Dear Friends,

Over the last couple of months I have been using this letter to offer some reflections on Psalm 23. I have suggested that it can enable our own personal spiritual formation in a similar way to the Lord's Prayer. I have suggested that the first verse "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want," is a fantastic statement of love and trust in a good and gracious God and that what follows after is a commentary upon how David sought to live out that love and trust in daily life. And that is what I want to reflect on today.

It is fine to know what the Psalm says, even to mediate on it or memorise it but if it is actually going to be helpful for spiritual transformation, we must find practical ways of living it out. It is all too easy to say, "I shall not want," or "I will fear no evil," but simply saying it, or even willing it, will not lead to lasting transformation.

The sportswear manufacturer Nike, use the slogan, "Just do it!" They do not want people just to buy their stock and then sit on their sofas. They want them to use what they have bought, to get active, to "just do it!"

Those three words could be a summary of Jesus "Great Commission" to his disciples, "Just do it!" Don't just listen, don't just read, don't just study, don't even just worship – get on and live the life of Jesus in every moment of every day. Live in the power and presence of His Spirit. By all means pray and worship and study Scripture because they are fundamental tools for our spiritual growth but they will make little difference if we don't act on what God says to us through them. The company of Jesus is called to be an active company of people living out God's mission in God's strength and partnering with God in God's great mission to "make all things new!" Even before lockdown, I suspect that the vast majority of the resources at our disposal as Christian communities were focussed on just three things: Sunday worship, pastoral care and our church buildings. But there is so much more to being the company of Christ in our communities than that. Again easy to say but less so to implement!

So how do we "just do it?"

The Psalmist has talked about spiritual nourishment and refreshment and guidance. He has talked about knowing the presence of the Shepherd in every situation and how that can lead to a life without lack or fear. He has talked about how sharing hospitality and resources with others can turn enemies into friends. And now, he concludes his Psalm with these words: "Surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

In his reflection on these words Dallas Willard writes: "How does this come to be? What is our part in dwelling with the Lord and living our days in such a way that goodness and mercy follow us in our wake? We must move from knowing to doing, from the idea of a life without lack into its reality. It is time to make plans to spend a day with Jesus."¹

I wonder, have you ever thought about the possibility of deliberately living just one day in the presence of Jesus, consciously and intentionally inviting Jesus into every minute of the day?

¹ Willard D, Life without lack, Nelson Books, 2018, P. 186. We shall be holding a Circuit Service via Zoom this Sunday evening at 6pm

In Scripture, each day begins at sunset not sunrise. Right at the start in Genesis 1 we are told “There was evening and there was morning – the first day!” So how do you go to bed with Jesus? Night-time is a gift to humanity to trust and rest. It is an opportunity to place the world and our own daily concerns into God’s hands and say “I trust you to be in charge and because you are in charge, I can rest.” And rest and sleep are vital spiritual practices for us. They enable us to function well during the daytime. So how we approach sleep is important. What might you do or stop doing to enable you to rest and sleep well. It is a chance to review the day with God, to pray for the people you have encountered and the work you have done, to bless them and commit them into God’s hands. Learning to “cast your burdens upon Jesus” will enable you to sleep better and to rise refreshed.

And when you rise, choose to make your first thought an opportunity to praise God for a new day and the potential that it holds. Look out the window, listen to the birds, smell the coffee, take a shower, have some breakfast and thank God for the rhythm of life and God’s good gifts. Then before you enter fully into the day ahead offer to God the conversations you will have, the meetings you will be involved in, the decisions you will need to make and God will guide you in right paths.

Every two or three hours, as you are able, take a break. Get up from your desk, or switch the TV off. Stretch, walk, get some fresh air and as you do, turn your mind back to Jesus, again, offer the work you do and the people you meet to God in prayer. Ask for God’s blessing upon them.

At meal times, turn off your phone, be present with the people you eat with, share in hospitality together, talk through your days, share your concerns. Hospitality and food are a great blessing to us, share them with others as you can. Engage in some leisure time, reading, playing, walking, creating and invite Jesus to do it with you so that you experience more of his joy. And then prepare well for sleep.

The more you consciously invite Jesus to be present in your daily activities and routine, the more he will take you up on your offer and the more opportunities he will place before you to experience and express his grace and goodness.

Plan to do it for a single day and see how it goes. And then plan for another day, and another. I guarantee it will not take long for you to notice signs of God’s fingerprints all over your daily life!

Every Blessing,

Rev Tim

Notices

Circuit Service

We shall be holding a Circuit Service this Sunday evening at 6pm via Zoom. I am delighted that we shall be able to welcome back Rev Lesley Taylor, our former superintendent Minister to share in this service with us. It will be an opportunity to say thankyou for her ministry amongst us and to bless her in her new appointment in Harrogate. It will be great to also have Rev Rick Ormerod with us, who will be sharing God’s word with us. I hope as many of you as possible are able to share in this time of worship and thanksgiving with us. These are the details you will need to take part:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82050388873> Meeting ID: 820 5038 8873

Resources for Worship

I am aware that many of our churches are now returning to church buildings for acts of worship. However, not all members will want, or be able to attend. In light of that, as a Circuit, we are committed to ensuring that resources for worship at home will be available on the Circuit website: www.wandamethodists.org.uk

Each week a service sheet will be available based on the services taking place at Christchurch and a link to the recorded service at Burley in Wharfedale is there to access to. I trust that these resources, in addition to what your own church is providing, will enable you to feel part of a worshipping community.