

Sermon Easter 6 /Rogation Sunday 22May 2022, Acts 16: 9-15, John 5:1-9

On this Rogation Sunday, let us ask for God's blessing on our own lives, on those whom we love and on the world in which we live, Amen

- God blesses us and encourages us and loves his whole creation and is desperate for us to care for it rather than follow our own short-term, self-centred ways of living. Rogationtide is traditionally a time to ask God to bless the crops that are sown and for protection and fruitful life in all areas of our existence. That's why we have included the extra prayer of our commitment to caring for our earth at the end of the service.
- Fresh water is necessary for all life to flourish.
- Jesus is the spiritual water of life bubbling up within us- let's not suppress that stream of living water with ideas or superstitions that sometimes make real life stagnate.
- In both our readings today water brings people into a close encounter with Jesus, the living water - through a conversation with or about him, through prayer with God. We too can open ourselves to the living water in our lives by having more prayerful conversations with God through Jesus, letting him transform us and by sharing God's love with others.
- In the Acts reading, a wealthy woman called Lydia is met by Paul who tells her of Jesus and she immediately is converted and asks that she and her household be baptised.
- The living water of Jesus is brought into their lives and they become part of the Way - followers of Christ, the Good News, which Paul and the disciples were beginning to spread throughout the area.
- In the story from John's gospel, we hear of a disabled man sitting for many, many years, pinning his hopes of a cure on being the first to bathe in the water of a particular pool when it was stirred up unexpectedly - a visible sign of something happening, so people convinced themselves it could then heal them- which was a bit superstitious - a bit like wearing a lucky charm or lucky socks when you need a bit of courage or reassurance to do something.
- But Jesus didn't need this water to heal the man. ***Jesus is the living water.*** He can transform lives suddenly and then be a faithful and enabling presence with us.
- Jesus comes along and immediately has compassion for the man. He steps straight into the situation, assesses it and acts, asking the man if he wants to be cured.
- Perhaps the man was lucky he was in the right place at the right time – or was it the working of the Holy Spirit?- he had no idea who Jesus was, even after he was cured, and unlike many other stories of Jesus healing people, the man hadn't asked Jesus to cure him, and he wanted to blame the circumstances..... perhaps he had lost hope in ever being cured.
- Jesus told him to take up his mat and walk, and however painful and unbelievable this would have been for the man disabled for 38 years, something made him have complete confidence in Jesus and he made the move. Jesus worked with the man to heal him but the man had to do his bit too, which Jesus gave him the courage to do.
- Jesus wants to work with each of us, because he loves us.
- Following Jesus's instructions on how to live our lives often isn't an easy ride, but he loves us and is with us and *can* help us overcome difficult situations to find moments of joy and fulfilment or even total transformation.
- God can give us courage, God can give us healing, God can give us love and make us feel included and valued, all we have to do is trust Him more and turn to his son Jesus Christ.
- Pray- have a conversation with God, tell Him your worries and thank him for your joys and blessings- make it 2 way and you may be surprised how He answers you if you take some

space to listen for the reply. Perhaps new ideas come into your mind or an openness to see others as vulnerable human beings with their own problems and worries and anxieties, just as much as you ...and I have....so you become more understanding and patient.

- Paul seems to have been very open to God speaking to him , listening to His guidance about where he should go next. V9 *“During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’”*
- I wonder if Paul was expecting to encounter a *man* in Macedonia, I think I would have been after that vision. Was Paul surprised when the person he was guided to on that Sabbath day in Philippi (in Macedonia) was a wealthy tradeswoman, Lydia?
- But Jesus is there for all people and both the stories today reinforce that very well.
- So let us have more frequent conversations with God through Jesus in our prayers, ask him for help and his blessing upon us . Trust in him to get us through whatever difficulties we’re facing - anxiety, pain, worry, uncertainty, feelings of being overwhelmed by life- whatever they are.
- Hand things over.
- But do your bit too. Jesus doesn’t just wave a magic wand and you are cured- the man had to respond to Jesus, he had to take up his mat and carry it –
- He had to be bold, trust Jesus had healed him without going anywhere near the water that was supposed to do that- Jesus’s love was the healing water not the physical pool.
- And ask for help from other people if you have too much on and it threatens to overwhelm you, it is probably God’s way of caring for you- by guiding you towards the help you need, even if it’s a challenge, physically, spiritually or emotionally.
- Look at how both stories happened on the Sabbath - the Holy Day - just as Sunday is our Holy Day-
- Do you think Jesus’s healing power was more effective on a Sabbath?
- Do you think God’s power is more effective on a Holy Day?
- Of course God has the power to heal and draw us closer to Him on any day but probably we are listening more carefully, we are opening ourselves to His healing more easily , we are ready to receive his love and forgiveness more deeply , when *we are gathered together as a church* focussing on Him and his son Jesus Christ, through listening, singing, praying and receiving His presence in our lives.
- So coming to a church service, whichever day you come - gives us one of the best opportunities to come closer to Jesus and feel his healing touch.
- So let’s not wait 38 years like the man in the gospel had to, for an experience with Jesus that transforms us, either a first one or a renewed one,
- **Let’s be open to Jesus, the water of life, today.**
- Come towards Jesus in a few minutes time at Communion- receiving him in bread and wine or in a blessing and feel Christ’s love for you.
- Ask him to fill you with his Spirit and his love and he may well transform your life today. Alleluia. Amen.
- Katrina Nice 22.5.22