

Sunday 6th June 2021 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 / Mark 3:20-34

Prayer: Heavenly Father, through weak human words, give us grace to hear your true and living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord and by Your Spirit may we respond to what you are saying to us. Amen

One of the things I have really enjoyed and been blessed by during the lockdown has been our Lectio Divina's . It's very simple, we don't prepare – but prayerfully read 2-3 times some verses, dwell on them individually in silence and then share what has come to us.

I wondered where to start with today's readings so I took the same approach – but without the benefit of sharing with some else The thought that came out was from Paul's writing was we "never give up".

Over the next few days I kept returning to this thought - **never give up** – I definitely didn't!! Even when I was struggling to swim my target number of lengths and each one seemed to be getting harder... or when my lawn looked more like a weed patch than a beautiful carpet of green.



But there's much we have given up - through the virus – many are things we wouldn't have chosen. We have desperately missed company – a laugh, fun.. Life has altered around us. We've had more time alone – particularly those of us who live alone – and if you're like me I'm sure there's been times we've felt like giving up.

We've now in another phase with things hopefully easing and so we have a unique opportunity to think about how we live our lives going forward.

- are we going on regardless?
- will we give things up?
- we will try to recover everything we've lost?
- what have we learnt that has really benefitted us?
- Do we keep on going regardless?



Keeping on regardless – often feels like pushing a boulder uphill; it's exceptionally hard work alone – and I don't think that's what God intended for us to live life in in our own strength and without encouragement.

Is "never give up" always the best advice?

My personality is one which finds it hard to give things up and throw things out .. don't look in my wardrobe at the many things I wore years ago that may one day come back into fashion!

You may recall the film The Mission which was released in 1986 and follows the experiences of a Jesuit missionary in 18th-century South America. Another key character is a Mercenary and slaver Rodrigo Mendoza who killed his half-brother in rage. He seeks forgiveness but insists on living with a penance of dragging behind him a really heavy bundle containing his armour and sword – which eventually threatens his own life. Is that what God demanded?



Sometimes we carry burdens of our own making.

We fail to hear God's words of forgiveness – you are forgiven – my Son has taken your burden.

In the NT letter written to the Hebrews we are encouraged to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”. Don’t get wrongly weighed down.

Through looking at today’s readings I identified 4 things that may help us to “never give up” – in the right way.

1) start seeing things from a different perspective

First from Paul – despite all that was going on and his numerous persecutions he could still see God at work.

I’m sure you’ve heard this well-known saying – “two men looked out from prison bars, one saw mud the other saw stars”. Or another saying I often tell myself when struggling – there’s two ways to crack a nut – stand back for a while and look for a different approach.



Paul’s vision of living in the Kingdom – was to focus on what he couldn’t see. I don’t think he had a half full rather than half empty approach but was realistic.

“Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger each day. These little troubles are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our troubles seem like nothing.”

Things that are seen don’t last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal. That’s why we keep our minds on the things that cannot be seen.

We need to look for God’s bigger perspective - beyond the immediate and not waste our sorrows but instead allow God create something of beauty for every situation knowing he hasn’t finished with us yet!!

2) be renewed daily

NIV – v 16 – “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are **being renewed day by day.**”

It’s essential – to make time with God a priority – to find that time each day to renew your focus on God - read his word, pray, worship, open ourselves to him.



It’s the only way to maintain our focus.

3) choose the right power source

From our gospel reading the crowds were attracted to Jesus. They wanted part of the action. see more miracles and maybe hear his teaching. It was non-stop for Jesus! Physically and emotionally demanding.



However the teachers of the law were unimpressed and they made the journey from Jerusalem to accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul - the prince of demons. That way they could ignore him!

Jesus quickly dismissed their accusations; he was delivering and setting people free from the power of Satan and evil so he would hardly be using a demonic power to do so! He obviously was using and was a greater power...

We've just been celebrating Pentecost when God sent His spirit in response to the disciples waiting and praying to receive power. God's Holy Spirit is available for all. It's as we open ourselves to God's spirit instead of being dependent on our own spirit that we will know his power.

and finally **4) don't go it alone! find others to share with**

I've loved the opportunity the pandemic has provided to look closer at nature and discover many amazing things.

One of the proverbs encourages us to go and look at the ant. They may be small but they certainly know how to work together be it against threats from people, animals and other ant colonies – or even overcoming potentially natural disasters.



I wonder how Jesus have felt when his family arrived – not to support him but demanding to take charge of him?

He too needed the support of others. He valued people's company and the many who supported him. But at this time his family got it badly wrong. "He's out of his mind" – even his mother appeared to be saying that!

But he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said – "Here are my mother and brothers" - here are the ones who are also seeking to do God's will; to listen to Him! This is my true family!

There will be times when those closest to you will let you down and you'll feel it badly but often at these times God brings someone else to be alongside you or is calling you to be that *alongside* person for someone else.

What we have probably missed most during the pandemic is company; Christian fellowship. Many returning to Church said they didn't realise what they had missed until they came back.

We are the body of Christ – we need one another and without one another we cannot fulfil all what God wants. But when together we are seeking God's will, reaching out to others that's when we will succeed.

Can I encourage you to take time to review where you are and where you want to be going forward.

- Never give up! – particularly when it comes to faith – keep trusting God!
 - let's keep things in the right perspective – God's perspective
 - let's make time to be renewed daily
 - let's not go it alone but be filled with the Holy Spirit
 - and be willing to be vulnerable so that we really can support one another.



By doing so we will make it to the summit – to the ultimate of being with God forever.

Prayer: Father God – help us to never give up following after you; may you be our focus, our power and our strength so that we have a message to share. Amen

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