

This is my beloved son, listen to him

Introduction

Wednesdays were comic days in our household when we were growing up. There was a ritual once we had arrived back from school. We had our standard cold drink and a couple of biscuits and then sat down, mostly on the kitchen floor, to read our comics. *School Friend*. *Hotspur*. Another for my younger brother. And *Look and Learn*, my mother's almost subtle way of increasing our general knowledge!

Look and Learn is what Jesus said to his disciples at the mass picnic in a remote place – could have been rural Devon, really, no shops nearby. We remember the Transfiguration today, that time when three startled disciples had the veil that separates heaven and earth twitched aside and they witnessed some the brightness of glory as Jesus spoke with Elijah and Moses.

Transfiguration comes in the everyday. At this picnic for up to 10 000 people there was transfiguration, only you had to look and learn.

Look

The disciples see the situation. It's stressful, children crying, adults are irritable. Hungry, restless people. A fairly volatile situation. They're worried. They wonder. They do the right thing, they go to Jesus who unhelpfully says, You give them something to eat! They have with them a picnic box full of food.... enough for one.

So, what about 9 999 others?

The thin veil between the seen and unseen is twitched aside as 5 loaves and 2 fish multiply into a shared meal for men, women and children.

Look.... and learn.

The average person in the crowd might well have missed the miracle and simply munched their fish sandwiches. Those who were looking, really looking, would have seen Jesus blessing and breaking loaves and fishes and wondered at the glorious abundance of God's goodness.

We are invited to look, really look, to be aware....and learn.

Nothing happens by accident.

Nothing is a coincidence.

It's all God-incidence! Why else would five loaves and two fish have been available?

Listen and find life

Isaiah says *Listen, and you will find life*. Everything is gift. It's given freely. Listen again to those glorious words from Isaiah.....

Is anyone thirsty?

Come and drink—

even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—

it's all free!

² Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength?

Why pay for food that does you no good?

Listen to me, and you will eat what is good.

You will enjoy the finest food.

³ "Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life.

Why are you uptight, having sleepless night worrying?

Why spend your money, yourself, on what does not ultimately satisfy?

The latest, the best, fine house, another holiday, food, alcohol

Why clutch on to fears, resentments, angers, insecurities? All the things we layer ourselves with, masking our deep longings.

Come..... listen..... with your ears wide open.....

What is it that we are to ingest, make part of us?

God is with us, whatever the circumstances, whatever the outcome.

Relax know that you are held and loved dearly.

There was a wedding in Thornbury on Friday. One of the promises bride and groom make to each other is to 'love and to *cherish*'. God's promise is to love and to cherish..... you.

Listen..... and you will find life.

Eat it. Absorb it.

Remember, put it together: you become what you eat.....

Eat this bread, drink this wine..... remember me. Flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, God with us.

The presence of God is not about our being under suspicion and disbelief.

(Chittister 2017:49) Listen.

Love

There are no lengths to which God will not go to woo us and to win us.

Look at Jesus!

Sadly, we carry unhelpful images of God – as stern judge, disciplinarian.

If the ten commandments seem negative to you – thou shalt not..... Look again.

The commandments are about right relationships.

Their subject matter:

Love God,

love your family,

love your neighbour,

love well, do not seek satisfaction in amassing what is not yours.

The leitmotiv, the one message that runs through the commandments is:

the will of God for the world – peace and justice – is all you need. When

the will of God for the world finally comes, you will have what you need,

what you yourself have been seeking all your life. (Chittister 2017:49)

God calls you to work and love with him, to be co-workers, co-lovers, if you like.

Paul in huge pain and sorrow says in today's reading that, if it would help, he would accept being cursed in order to bring his fellow Jews to Christ.

That's love!

You see, *the well-being that God seeks for me is likewise sought for all others. How can I not speak for their needs, see their values, argue for their rights, work to support their children?* (Chittister 2017:50)

Too often, I suspect, we become so ensnared in the tangled web of our own inadequacies, fears, anxieties and, let's not put too fine a point on it, our own selfishnesses, that we fail to look outwards to the all too evident needs and longings round about us.

Isaiah understood that God's love is offered to lonely, longing people.

Jesus loved the people who eagerly followed him to a lonely place – and he made food available.

Conclusion

Look and learn – God loves you

Listen and learn – God loves you

Love – as God loves you!

For this God is

Father - God for us

Jesus - God with us

And Holy Spirit - God within us

Look and learn, and you will find life in all its fullness – which is transfiguration!

References

Joan Chittister (2017), *Radical Spirit*, Convergent
Richard Rohr (2016), *The Divine Dance*, Whitaker House