

view volunteers ~ It is estimated that the UK benefits annually to the tune of over £3.3 billion p.a. and within the Church of England from over 22.3 million hours of voluntary service each month! Yet it remains unsung for the main ~ taken for granted, undervalued and ignored because it isn't measured by what it costs financially! We talk of the caring professions disparagingly because we cannot measure their value and we label those who take the contemplative or monastic way of life as having it easy ~ we do not regard it highly in Protestantism, yet pre-Reformation the vast majority of renewals of spiritual life in the church were associated with these communities. Think about it ~ and most of us would not survive living in a closed, loving, sharing and prayerful community for a month! (Pray for those who join the Community of St. Anselm at Lambeth Palace ~ their presence changes the DNA of that place ~ yet we apply a pseudo-humorous denigration of them ~ (at Synod last month I heard the ridicule of them wearing their white albs throughout the day ~ and the question 'but what to they do? What they do is pray but even the church does not always regard that as practical ~ although it most certainly is!)

What do you value ~ what you can have and hold or what you hope for? Do you boast of your works or are you credited as righteous because of your faith?

Jesus teaches Nicodemus ~ he helps him to a place where he can see clearly!. Nicodemus comes to Jesus thinking in tangible terms, in the physical reality and material/worldly understanding of birth and being born in a society that valued male babies above female ones and ensured that the men held responsibility for all possessions and possessed their family members, but in possessing them did not necessarily value them. Being born again is about allowing the Spirit to help us see clearly ~ to see as Jesus sees as God wants us to see and in doing so ~ **Knowing Jesus and making Him known.**

Ministry Musings (12th March 2017)

Last week we considered what happens when we are not obedient ~ when temptation is stronger than what we know to be right or have been told not to do!

This week in Genesis we hear of the Call of Abram ~

“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”

If you and I find it difficult enough to find the discipline or trust to give God five minutes each day how much harder must it be to simply do as God says? Humanly it would be impossible, either that or reckless and irrational ~ and that is how the world might well view our actions, but within the Body of Christ, led and sustained by the Holy Spirit the reckless and irrational become the outworking of servanthood. Abrams' obedience will be rewarded by blessing but he has to be obedient to see that grow towards fruition ~ and he may not see it completed in his own lifetime! All he has is the promise that God is true to His word and it will be as he has ordained. The blessings will not come to pass because of the effort that Abram makes throughout his journey of faith or his name change to Abraham but simply because he is obedient and makes that pilgrimage in faith which allows God to work through him and bring about His promises.

You and I are tempted to work for God, to tell God what is needed in His world rather than see what God is doing in His creation and work with Him ~ the former is self gratification that later is righteousness and often requires self sacrifice. Self sacrifice is not about neglecting our own well being ~ it is ensuring that we are fit for purpose and the purpose is to be about God’s work whatever form that takes in our lives using the gifts God provides us with for the tasks He requires of us. Sorting our wellbeing involves being born again ~ all of us are born of flesh but we need to recognise that we need to be born of the Spirit and that can happen at any age ~ it happens by the prompting of the Spirit and may happen when we first commit to Christ or may happen as we grow in discipleship ~ whenever it takes place in our lives it should be something we desire in our lives and actively ask God to accomplish in us. It is what transforms our faith from being one dimensional to being 3-D and much more it is

knowing Jesus ~ making Him known !

Genesis 12: 1 - 4a OT page 10
Romans 4:1 - 5, 13 - 17 NT page 150
John 3:1-17 NT page 90

Chapter 2 of Dethroning Mammon looks at how we assess and measure things ~ acknowledging that what we measure controls us. How is what we consider to be valuable tied to those things we can measure? Our Archbishop challenges us to consider who we see no value in, who we pass by, who in fact we consider to be of no use to us. He challenges us to consider what we invest in ~ and points out that the great men of the Old Testament invested in their future generations ~ they took seriously the promises of God, over their immediate comfort or material gain. He makes us look again at the great value of celebrating at Christmas but how the world ~ the shout of mammon can drown out or mask all that really matters. And he challenges us to see clearly who we value, including ourselves and to recognise how important it is to learn to see beyond the immediate ~ the blind man sees more clearly who Jesus is than Jesus' own disciples and, in contrast, Zacchaeus does not want to be seen for who he really is. Both characters are ignored by the crowd who turn their backs on both men and try to hide their existence. Both men see Jesus for who He is and Jesus in return clearly sees them. Both men move from being considered as insignificant and given no value by their neighbours to being disciples and valued as followers of Jesus. When Jesus rides into Jerusalem the people see the fulfilling of the prophecy in Zechariah but the view it more as the beginning of political liberation rather than spiritual change. When the crowd is disappointed when the truth filled reality of Jesus turns out to be different from their illusion of Him they lash out ~ their expectations were false and the power of material need ~ mammon ~ rules them. When you and I are disappointed we lash out in some way or another too, We do not see or we chose not to see “the

things that make for peace” (Luke 19:42).

This morning ask yourself ~ do you identify the things that make for peace in your life? Ask what in your life you measure by calculating risk and return rather than abundance and generosity? We often want what is simple (or easy) but the simplicity clouds more than it reveals. It is simple (easier) to throw rubbish out without separating recyclables but then it goes to landfill and we are running out of space to fill and what is filled develops problems detrimental to God's creation. We have not seen clearly and still the world tries to deny that there is a global warming issue ~ there is more measurable money in continuing to be destructive more instant gratification and less investment in the generations that will come after us! Jesus turned the tables in the Temple because the Temple instead of symbolising God's presence and the peoples commitment to God had become Mammonised the focus had become raising the funds to maintain the costly environment ~ the authorities had lost sight of what the Temple was there for ~ their seeing dulled by familiarity and hearing reduced by the clamour of money.

Use our readings today to consider where your own sight is dulled or hearing reduced.

Look at the Call of Abram ~ effectively Abram is required to leave everything that is stable and material ~ everything measurable around him. Because his vision, his seeing, was focused on the next generation He trusted God's promises for them and his seeing clearly allowed or at least assisted his obedience. He trusted God's provision ~ the intangible rather than the tangible; in a complex and clouded situation he saw clearly. That sight was not revealing how things would work out but that they would be blessed.

Paul writes to the Roman church that if you work for wages there is an obligation what transpires is not a gift! How do we