

Coming Up at St Mark's

LENT MISSION COURSE:

Oatlands Free Car Washing

Come and wash cars on the streets – for free! Sunday 17th March, 2-4pm. From church. Bring a bucket and sponge.

Ashfield Home Spend time with residents and share communion

Monday 25th March, 1.45pm.

Amnesty Letter Writing

At church. Saturday 23rd March, 2-4pm

Men's Weekend, 10th-12th May, 2013. Jonas Centre, with James Barnett. If you can book by Easter that will be really helpful...thank you.

N.B. GOOD FOR GROUP LEADERS:

Friday 22 March at 7 for 7.15 pm until 9.30 pm: **an evening on**

Emotional Intelligence. Dr David Walton, psychologist and author of "Emotional Intelligence - a practical guide." This is an evening for everyone to find out what it is and how it can affect your health, your relationships and your family.

Tickets - £5, this includes light refreshments. Tickets are available from the Wellspring office: 01423 881 881 or

office@wellspringtherapy.co.uk

All proceeds go to Wellspring



Please pray for...

Pray for **Susie Appleby** who is recovering from a big operation – for swift healing and a sense of God's presence.

Give thanks for the **Pop Connection** project at Rossett Acre which we are sponsoring, and pray that it will be fruitful in building community relationships.

Continue to pray for **Andrea and David O'Neill** and family, that God's glory would be seen, and that He would strengthen them.

Pray for our **Easter celebrations**, particularly those visiting us.

Pray for the **PCC**, for wisdom in making decisions about our future strategy.

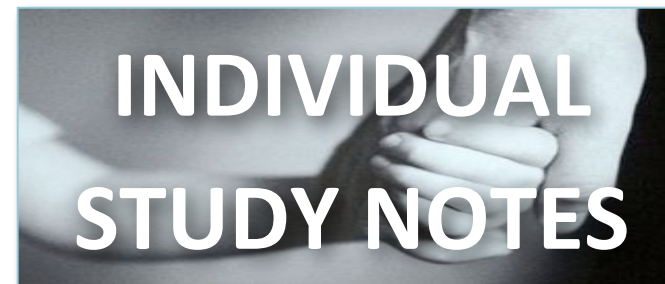
Pray for **Pablo**, who has just emailed to say his mother has died. Pray for comfort and strength for him and the whole family.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Meg Queripel**, who has accepted a post as a deputy headteacher in Iringa. Pray for wisdom and energy to serve the Lord, Monday to Saturday!

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



Lent Worship:

Week beginning: 17th March 2013

Every week during Lent there will be a suggested activity you can do to make your journey towards Easter. Read Mark 15: 9-13 and 15. Get a whip - or equivalent object/picture!. Place it before your cross. Thank Jesus for all the pain he endured. Pray for the persecuted church, and for the people of Syria. Next week you will need: **a crown of thorns, or something equivalent!**

The Way of Jesus: Seven: the Rhythm of work and rest.

Briefly reflect on the main way God spoke to you through this Sunday's teaching:

Matt 6: 25-27; Exodus 16: 21-31. We've been piecing together the parts of the jigsaw that make up the Way of Jesus. The main focus is to seek His kingdom above everything else. To love God, and love others. He wants us to know him as a Father, as Son and in the power of his Spirit. We are to be formed by the disciplines of Bible, prayer, worship and community. We are to know him as whole people, with all of our senses, and express our faith not just with words but with all of who we are. And because all of life is important to God, and not just the so-called "spiritual" bits, the six days of the week are as important in our discipleship as any Sunday.

But number seven is as important a part of the jigsaw as all the others - and in fact holds a lot of them together. It also has the potential to make some of us feel very angry. We will feel threatened by the idea of the Sabbath, by the command to take a rest, because quite frankly, particularly in our kind of context, many of us are driven into the ground. We find little time for ourselves, for our families and children, and little time for God. And anything which calls you to address that is going to be threatening. But if you do find this message difficult then I ask you to listen to what your reaction is saying to you.

I meet many people who are stressed and/or depressed. In 9/10 cases I would say that their depression is linked to overbusyness and tiredness. Sometimes one of the best cures for depression is simply to get enough rest. It's not rocket science. Listen to your body. Look at your family life. Look at your relationship with God. When did Jesus ever say, "Man, I'm just too busy and tired?"

A few years ago I went on a weekend retreat with some men. We were told it was about the Sabbath. On the Friday evening we lit the Sabbath candle and said some prayers. Then we went to the pub and chatted, and then we went to bed. The following morning we got up, had breakfast and were told not to wash up. "What are we going to do now?" we wondered. The answer was - nothing. We walked, we rested, we chatted, we ate, we prayed. That was it. We didn't have any talks about the Sabbath - we just lived it. At the end of the day I felt so re-created, so restored. From the Sabbath candle we lit six further candles as a sign that we were to take the experience of rest into the rest of the week. Our Sabbath experience would give us the energy we needed for the work that was ahead of us.

We were not resting from our work. We worked out of our rest. This is a key insight you find in the Bible. God makes the world in six days, finishing with the creation of human beings. Then, on the seventh day, He rests. The seventh day of creation is as important to God as all the others. But the important thing to notice is that Adam's first experience of life is the Sabbath. First of all, he rests. It is from this experience that God, in Genesis 2:15, gives him his mandate-to unfold the creation. Adam is not made to rest from work. He is made to work from rest.

When God gave the people of Israel the commandment, and it is a commandment, to take a Sabbath He said, "Keep the Sabbath day holy, and remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord brought you out of there." God wanted to rescue His people from slavery, and to remind them that they were no longer slaves He gave them the Sabbath - a day when they would be slave to no one.

If you are a slave, you need the Sabbath. It is vital for your work and efficiency, it is vital for your relationships, and it is vital for your soul. Rob Bell put it like this: There are so many layers to the healing of the soul. One practice that has brought incredible healing is the taking of a Sabbath. Now when we read the word Sabbath, most of us think that the real issue behind the Sabbath isn't which day of the week it is but how we live all the time. I decided to start taking one day a week to cease from work. And what I discovered is that I couldn't even do it at first. I would go into depression. By the afternoon I would be so . . . low.

I realized that my life was all about keeping the adrenaline buzz going and that I was only really happy when I was going all the time. When I stopped to spend a day to remember that I am loved just because I exist, I found out how much of my efforts were about earning something I already have. Sabbath is taking a day a week to remind myself that I did not make the world and that it will continue to exist without my efforts. Sabbath is a day when my work is done, even if it isn't. Sabbath is a day when my job is to enjoy. Period. Sabbath is a day when I am fully available to myself and those I love most. Sabbath is a day when I remember that when God made the world, he saw that it was good. Sabbath is a day when I produce nothing. Sabbath is a day when I remind myself that I am not a machine. Sabbath is a day when at the end I say, "I didn't do anything today," and I don't add, "And I feel so guilty."

Sabbath is a day when my phone is turned off, I don't check my email, and you can't get ahold of me. Jesus wants to heal our souls, wants to give us the shalom of God. And so we have to stop. We have to slow down. We have to sit still and stare out the window and let the engine come to an idle. We have to listen to what our inner voice is saying.

People who find it difficult to take a Sabbath I think are probably wrestling with two problems. The first is that they think life depends on them too much. Again and again God wanted to teach His people while they were in the desert that they could depend on Him. Some of them thought that they would need to collect more manna than they needed for the Sabbath. But God told them to rely on him. Can you depend on your Father enough to allow yourself to obey His command to rest?

Another reason some of us struggle with resting is because we are driven by low self-esteem to justify our existence, or find our identity, in our productivity and what other people think of us. This is why if you want to grow as a Christian whose identity and self-worth is found in Jesus, then you must develop Sabbath living. You need a day which reminds you that you are as valuable when you are doing nothing as you are when you are in the thick of things.

Some of us are thinking, "How are we going to do this? How are we really going to have a day when we don't answer the phone, don't check out emails, don't do jobs etc.?" It is so countercultural. The answer is that we have to put effort into it! Sometimes getting a good Sabbath is hard work - you have to prepare for it! Just ask Israeli people about it.

No Christian is created to be driven. No Christian is created to be overtired and overstretched. God never asks this of us. Instead, we are made to be living out of a secure identity in a Father we can depend on, and expressing that in a rhythm of work and rest. We are to be working from rest – a way of life which He has not only gifted us but commanded us. This is the Way of Jesus.

Study

Matthew 6: 25-34: What in this teaching helps to you live in the present moment before God?
Exodus 20: 8-11; Exodus 31: 17; Deut 5: 12-15. How does the Sabbath remind us of our creation and the exodus story? Why does God take it so seriously?

Luke 4: 16. Matthew 12: 5-6. What was Jesus' approach to the Sabbath? Does he affirm it?

Acts 17: 2. What was Paul's approach to the Sabbath?

Hebrews 4: 1, 9-11. Why do we need to make "every effort" to enter rest?

Living it out (Application):

What would you need to do, practically speaking, in order to clear space for a complete day of rest once a week? How would you feel about cutting out phone/emails/texts?