

In daily life - towards imitation

As a young curate, just after I was ordained, I had two very brief but formative experiences which I have never forgotten. The first was an embarrassing moment at a posh yacht club reception I was asked to attend. On the previous Sunday, my first in the parish, I had met a bewildering number of people. So, when a lady came up to me and said, "I met you on Sunday" I felt bound to say, "I am sorry but I don't recall your name". "Tozer", she replied. "Oh yes", I said, "Mrs. Tozer," at which she corrected me in a loud voice so that everyone around us could hear, "LADY Tozer." I was very emphatically being put in my place! I hoped the floor would open. Just a few weeks later, it fell to me to take my turn at leading a Sunday morning Service in the chapel of a large mansion outside the city which belonged to a distinguished local peer and which he had loaned to the County Council to use as a residential school for children with special needs. Lord Roborough, as was his title, came to greet me in the vestry before the Service and made it clear that he particularly wanted to say to me, "I will be sitting with my family at the back of the Chapel but please take no notice of us at all and simply speak to these young people they are the important ones."

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION

Why is humility so important when it comes to mission?

Philippians 2: 1-11. What is surprising about Jesus' humility?

John 13: 1-17. Why must we let Jesus wash us daily?

Luke 18: 9-17. How does this story unlock the good news?

1 Corinthians 12: 12-21. How can humility make us more confident of our role?

1 Peter 5: 5-7. What help is there here in developing a humble spirit?

Living it out

Where do you struggle with humility? How can we help each other...gently!!

Prayer suggestion:

Learn 1 Peter 5: 5-7 as a group. Then pray through each phrase, asking God to work on your hearts to shape them more like His.

Joining a group and other resources:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160. There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos: <http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>

INSPIRE

Everywhere...in everything

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."
C.S. Lewis



Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals.
Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.

Week beginning: 21st June 2015.

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; in - to each other; out - to mission

Up

Draw a cross, starting with the vertical line. The line points up to God and down to earth. God in his love stepped into our world and brought His love to us on the cross, so that we can love Him and know Him. Read together about what Jesus has done in 1 Peter 2: 24.

In

Now draw the horizontal line on the cross. This line points from side to side, to each other. Thank God for the many opportunities we have to meet together and encourage one another in St Mark's. Pray for the group of children and adults at Spree next weekend.

Out

God loves the homeless man on the street, and indeed the whole of Creation. He calls us to love them too by the way we behave and share. Can you bring something to drop off at the food collection point in church for our Mission partner Harrogate Homeless Project? Following on from the Climate Change lobby on Wednesday in London, how could you put your love for Creation into practice this week?

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 22nd June.

Readings: Psalm 71, Romans 11: 25-end. Focus verse: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" 36 For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Tuesday 23rd June.

Readings: Psalm 73, Romans 12:1-8. Focus verse: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Wednesday 24th June. Birth of John the Baptist

Readings: Psalm 50, Luke 3: 1-17. Focus verse: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all people will see God's salvation.'

Thursday 25th June.

Readings: Psalm 78: 1-39, Romans 13: 1-7. Focus verse: Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Friday 26th June.

Readings: Psalm 55, Romans 13: 8-end. Focus verse: 11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

Saturday 27th June.

Readings: Psalm 76, Romans 14: 1-12. Focus verse: 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

Where have you experienced humble leadership?

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Luke 14: 1-11. The freedom of self-forgetfulness

When, a good few years ago now, Barbara and I moved to a parish in inner London south of the river, we quickly learned that you found your way round by the names of pubs! We got on the Underground at The Elephant and Castle, we got off the bus at The Thomas a Becket, and so on. But there was one surprising and not very helpful pub sign we often passed in the Old Kent Rd. — "The World Tuned Upside Down". But then it struck me that this sign summed up exactly what Jesus did. His teaching about the Kingdom of God, about the values and priorities of the Kingdom, turned accepted values, the world's values, upside down. The poor widow's mite, which Jesus said was worth far more than the silver coins being thrown into the treasury by the well-off, the good Samaritan (a member of a despised racial group), the Pharisee and the tax-collector at prayer in the Temple are just a few examples; and didn't he say about the Kingdom, "the last shall be first." And here Jesus is again, in today's Gospel reading, turning things upside down: "all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Lk. 14:11) It had begun with an invitation; Jesus was invited to a meal in the house of a leading Pharisee — it's either a lunch or supper party — since it's the Sabbath, Luke tells us, this could be the late morning meal after synagogue worship. Shared meals were a very important part of Jewish family and community life, and still are. But this occasion was a bit different. Most of the guests were religious lawyers and Pharisees — the heavy brigade was there and they were watching Jesus closely, Luke tells us. Were they present to catch Jesus out, by something he might say or do? But Jesus was watching them too. He noticed how these important people were vying with one another to secure the places of honour, jockeying for position, arguing about who was the most important. It was a, "Who do you think you are?" kind of situation.

In the Gospel we read that Jesus noticed the ridiculous concern of the guests for their own self importance and where they thought they ought to be in the pecking order. But instead of commenting about it, he told them the parable we have just heard read, the parable of the wedding feast and the guest who took the lowest place. We are constantly being encouraged to be a competitive society. Do I measure myself up against other people? What is my self-image? Jesus told his highly competitive fellow guests: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." So, what is Christian humility? It is much misunderstood. It is not about low self-esteem. God longs for us to be fully the people he created us to be. Nor is it about adopting a false or self-imposed modesty. Still less is it about the kind of fawning obsequiousness so well captured by Dickens in his character Uriah Heep. Christian humility is about becoming fully yourself under God and about learning to be just that. It is about recognising that we are dependent on the love of God and his grace every day of our lives. That is what defines us, and that is the first step on the way to becoming all that we are called to be. It is God's love for us just as we are that gives us our sense of self-worth. It is because God has called us and equips us to serve him in our own individual and particular way that we do not have to try to be someone else. Nor is Christian humility about avoiding responsibility should we be called to lead. I liked the simple, direct attitude of a Bishop under whom I once worked who told me that each morning, as he swung his legs out of bed and placed his feet on the floor, he said, "Lord, here am I, Peter, reporting for duty." Humility is about knowing that we have not yet arrived. And if we live, consciously, in the love of God, we will see his love reflected in others — we will see the best in them and perhaps catch a glimpse of the possibilities under God for them — and so be helped to find our own place in God's great economy. Humility will not be something we are for ever trying to achieve, but rather a disposition which grows within us and gives us freedom, the freedom of self-forgetfulness.