

Coming Up at St Mark's

13TH MARCH WHOLE CHURCH
PRAYER MEETING. 8.30pm

CHURCH SPRING CLEAN.
SATURDAY MARCH 2ND, 10-12.
INCLUDING COFFEE AND CAKE!!!!

LENT MISSION COURSE:

Litter pick - pickers and bags
provided. Start at church
Saturday March 9th. 10am - 12noon
Contact Jon Dening dening@me.com
or 874304.

Oatlands Free Car Washing
Come and wash cars on the streets
- for free! Sunday 10th March, 2-
4pm. From church. Bring a bucket
and sponge.

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...

Give thanks for the **development of the church strategy** being looked at by the PCC, and pray that it will be well communicated from April.

Pray for the group from St Mark's visiting **the Holy Land** over the next two weeks – for a fruitful and safe journey.

Pray for **Andrea and David O'Neill** – Andrea says, "Really felt the benefit of all your prayers, especially while in hospital. Felt very 'carried' and more able to just go with the flow. Eating, drinking, weight and some physical strength are the main prayer points."

Pray for a good **Sanctuary** meeting on February 26th with Sue Russell

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Al Shurooq School for the blind in Bethlehem**, providing care and education for blind children brought to them from the West Bank and Gaza.
www.nsfvh.org

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!

How can you
join in with the
Lent Mission
Course?

Lent Worship:

Every week during Lent there will be a suggested activity you can do to make your journey towards Easter. Read Matthew 26: 14-16 & 27: 3-5. Put a bag containing coins next to your cross. Pray for all who have been betrayed by friends, been falsely accused by friends, family, the media or law courts. Pray for persecuted Christians. Commit yourself to speaking truthfully to others. Next week you will need: **a towel and basin.**

Being ambitious in the Way of Jesus

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

A major diocesan strategy has been entitled: 'Ambition for Mission.' I suspect there may be some people who would be uneasy about such a title. 'Ambition' can be seen as somehow 'worldly' and not a fitting characteristic for a Christian, let alone a diocese. Ambition, it might be argued, was exactly what caused Satan's downfall. There's certainly nothing uplifting about the stereotype of the thrusting, go-getting young (usually) man who is out for the top, with the money and lifestyle that go with that, and who is willing to step on anyone in his way on his climb to be at the top of the heap. However ambition is not something we can simply consign to the 'non-Christian' world. AS followers of the Way it is something we have to work out in our own lives. No doubt some Roman Catholic Cardinals are doing that right now.

If we were to say that 'ambition' is 'a burning desire to achieve something' we might, rightly, say that all our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, much admired last year, were hugely ambitious. That's the point: **it is what we have a burning desire to achieve that characterises our ambition – not the desire in itself.** What is your ambition?

What was the ambition of Jesus? He stated it in our Gospel reading **'My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work.'** To describe something as your food, that is the very thing that sustains your life, is to clearly identify a burning desire. However before we think this is something too high powered for us – look at the context. Jesus is tired and waits at the well while His disciples go off to get some food. He meets the woman and asks for a drink of water (presumably because He was thirsty – not because this was 'Step 1 of the Samaritan Evangelisation strategy!'). Then He has a conversation with her about her faith and

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 24th February 2019

how it could grow and deepen. By the time the disciples come back with food Jesus has been invigorated by this meeting to the extent of forgetting his hunger, because His ambition has been ignited. 'Look, Look' He says to His friends, 'The harvest is ready.' That isn't 'Step 1 in the Global Evangelisation Strategy' its Jesus getting excited about talking to people about their faith. **Ambition is more frequently achieved through lots of small steps than one giant leap.** The athletes that amazed us last summer had years of hard training behind them – the day by day small efforts that work towards achieving something. To keep that going there needs to be a fire inside that gets them up on the cold, wet mornings when they don't want to train – that fire is called ambition.

In the Epistle reading Paul fans the flames of Timothy's ambition – but again, look in context – he doesn't tell Timothy to 'leap tall buildings at a single bound', but he spells out the day by day solid activity that over time builds into something. **So ambition is a combination of the loftiest aspirations and the most mundane stepping stones that lead to them – both at the same time.** All those who we would admire as having achieved something would tell us that.

By now you may wonder if rather than being too ambitious – we may not be being ambitious enough! **The difference between daydreams and ambition is work.** Jesus said His food was 'to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work' Not to ponder and debate how good it would be if people could grow in their faith and knowledge of God – but to talk to a Samaritan woman about what it meant to her. Jesus said 'Where your treasure is – there will your heart be also.' So don't first ask yourself 'What is my ambition?' but look at what you're prepared to put effort into – that may already be a hint to your developing ambition. It would be helpful to try and state that ambition (even write it down) and of course to pray and reflect on whether it is an appropriate ambition - but the one thing the Gospels seem to discourage is lack of ambition.

Keep this real though – I suspect for many people their ambition is to do with those they love – to see their families growing and living happy and fulfilling lives, and they invest a lot of time, energy and money into trying to help this happen. That is a worthy ambition – in fact it doesn't sound too different from God's ambition for His children. The superstars of ambition are vastly outnumbered by the ordinary people – who are no less ambitious.

There are some ambitions that we can identify that Jesus seems to speak out against in the Gospels and some of these challenge our celebrity culture and the idea that ambition is about what I can get rather than what I can give. Consider these:

- Accumulating excessive wealth just for the sake of it – Jesus told the parable of the man who did this only to discover he was going to die that very night.
- Being admired for our visible piety or charitable giving – Jesus attacked the Pharisees for this and suggested that this might gain them religious celebrity status, but that it was a hollow righteousness

- Gaining power over others and not using it for their benefit – Jesus said that this was what the 'rulers' of the time did, but that it wasn't to be how Christians behaved, instead theirs was to be servant leadership.

The word we should link with ambition and which is often the indicator of whether the ambition is uplifting or not is **motive**. Why do we want to achieve our ambition?

If the diocese's 'ambition for mission' is to get more money into the church or to be regarded as 'successful' and able to boast about 'numbers' or to keep clergy in work - we might question the motives. But if, like Jesus, it is a response to seeing the hunger in our society for something more, and wanting to find ways to help people grow and deepen their faith, then maybe 'ambition' is exactly what is needed.

One way to reflect on what our ambitions are is to consider the following exercise: Imagine you are an invisible watcher at your own funeral. Try to really picture the scene. Three people are going to get up and speak about you and your life; a member of your family, a close friend and someone you don't get on with. Imagine what they would say. What would you want them to say? As you think about what you want them to say – in effect how you want your life to be remembered – does that help define what your real ambitions are?

Finally - for many in our world today ambition is linked with success – but again we need to recall what Jesus said – His ambition was to do his Father's work – He left the outcome to His Father. In terms of his life Jesus would hardly have been regarded as a success – He was a carpenter from a little town in an occupied country, who was unheard of for most of His life and who, after a short period of popularity, was stitched up in a rigged trial and executed as a common criminal.

It is not success in the eyes of the world that will measure the outcome of our ambition, but the approval of our Lord.

Study

Read Philippians 3 v8 – 14 – what was Paul's ambition?

Read John 18 v 28 – 19 v 22 – compare these two ambitious men – Jesus and Pilate

Read 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 – are you surprised how ambitious the language is to describe seeking spiritual gifts?

Read Matt 25 v 14-28 – the Parable of the talents – what does this say about lack of ambition?

Living it out (Application):

Try the exercise at the end of the study notes – put into writing your ambitions.

Consider what the mundane day to day steps are towards achieving your ambitions.