

Sometimes we need to “carry” each other to Jesus...

Wash one another's feet
Love one another
Be members of one another
Give preference to one another in honour
Be devoted to one another
Be of the same mind towards one another
Do not judge one another
Build up one another
Accept one another
Admonish one another
Great one another with a holy kiss
Wait for one another to eat
Have the same care for one another
Serve one another
Bear one another's burdens
Show tolerance for one another
Be kind to one another
Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
Be subject to one another
treat one another as more important than yourselves
Do not lie to one another
Comfort one another
Encourage one another
Live in peace with one another
Seek that which is good for one another
Stimulate one another to love and good deeds
Confess your sins to one another
Pray for one another
Be hospitable to one another
Serve one another
Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another
Have fellowship with one another



Please pray for...

Your prayer and response is needed:
Initial feedback from the unmet needs audit is revealing a lack of support for (a) those experiencing divorce and relationship breakdown; (b) the bereaved; (c) single parents; (d) parents and young people facing the pressures and challenges of being a teenager; and (e) those experiencing loneliness and isolation.

Are these your needs or the needs of those you come into contact with? If not, what other needs do you see?

Please can you feedback the key points from your discussion, together with any ideas about how we might begin to address these needs to stmarkskingdomlife@gmail.com

Pray for **Mo and Andrew Clarke and Hedley Gibson**, in need of healing and strength at the moment...

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

This month we are praying for **Christian Aid**. Pray for **Poppy Winks**, our **Christian Aid speaker** at the Communion Service on May 8th, and for Lynn Kennell as she coordinates our parish collection. Thank you so much for the fantastic response to the request for Christian Aid collectors!

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!



War tears lives apart.
You can help piece them back together.

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 4th May 2014

Another reminder of next **Saturday 10th May (morning only)** - **Leadership Development gathering with Elaine Storkey**. Elaine is a gift to us – former President of Tearfund, Thought for the Day speaker, profound theologian...she will be giving a good amount of input on leadership, there will be worship and a reflective learning process for you to listen to God for your group leadership. Then, on **May 14th** there is our **prayer gathering (7.30)**.



Welcome and worship:

Open question: what is our greatest need? Read out the list of one another statements on the back sheet. Spend time thanking God for other Christians – that we can carry each other to Jesus when we don't have strength ourselves.

Luke 5: 17-26. If you want to come to Jesus...

People don't always fulfil our expectations - either for good or bad. You probably know what it's like to have people have expectations of you which are just completely off the mark. Sometimes our interpretations of others can make all the difference. Luke is full of stories of people who have different expectations of Jesus but are constantly surprised by the way he acted.... So here you have Jesus in probably his home in Capernaum. There are about 50 people crammed in and a huge crowd outside. We told that teachers of the law and religious types had come from all over – travelling for days to listen to him. We can tell from the story that they also all had their agendas. They weren't there as open-minded individuals. **Yet even though he was surrounded by people who were well respected, who had made a huge effort to be there, Jesus felt no pressure to conform to their expectations of what he should be.**

It's too easy to try and make Jesus fit in to our own agendas, and to ignore the evidence in the process. The Pharisees wanted a “good teacher”. They weren't prepared for a son of God with the authority to forgive sins. Lots of people nowadays tend to prefer the “good

teacher” version as well. On a website called “Atheists for Jesus” I came across this quote: “My respect for Jesus is not based on the Cross, but rather on the Mount--not on His death and supposed resurrection, but on His teachings as exemplified by the Sermon on the Mount.” **This person is deliberately filtering out things about Jesus to create someone who goes against the evidence.** But Jesus refused to let people do this - he refused to be shaped according to what other people wanted. **If you're going to come to Jesus you have to meet him on his own terms,** and not some prescribed formula that's more convenient for you. And this also means that if you're going to come to him then you have to respond to who he actually said he was. **No one in that house thought Jesus was just claiming to be a good teacher. Jesus’ self-understanding is consistently presented in the gospels as being the son of God.** When doubting Thomas fell down before him crying, “My Lord and my God”, Jesus did not stop him from going too far. In John 5 Jesus says, “the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father.” John 14: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” No one was in any doubt about what he was doing. He wasn’t claiming to be “a child of God” in a general, human sense. He was claiming divinity in a “right to forgive sins” sense. John 5: “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” Later on “the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” **“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”** C.S. Lewis purposefully put it, “You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Even if you understand that you can’t make Jesus into what you want him to be, and that He is much more than a good teacher, it’s still shocking that the first thing he says to the paralyzed man is, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” It’s not just shocking that Jesus should have the authority to forgive sins, **it’s shocking that He says this first.** It wouldn’t be the first thing that I would assume the man was looking for. That wasn’t why he had come.

When we come to Jesus, we can come thinking that we know what is best for us, what it is that He needs to do for us. You may know people who have asked God for something, you may even have asked Him yourself, and been disappointed that He did not deliver as you had hoped. He has not met your expectations, and you have walked away. **But Jesus, loving the paralyzed man more than even his friends, looked into his heart and knew what was best for him. He knew what would bring him real wholeness.** Because he knew that this man’s life could not be made whole simply by making him physically well. **There are plenty of people walking around who are still crippled by guilt, fear, loneliness, and an unfulfilled need to know they are loved.** Because he is the Son of God, he sees into what the eternal picture, the eternal need, the eternal salvation is. According to the Bible, you can be walking around, but still be paralyzed. **If you are going to come to Jesus,**

you have to allow him to know what’s best for you. If we base our love for Him on whether our presenting needs are met, we are not treating Him like He is God. The answer to life is not always getting what we want. Of course we want the sick to get well – Jesus always demonstrated this. But our deepest need is having a true reason to dance. If you haven’t heard Jesus say, “Your sins are forgiven,” you haven’t come to Him yet. Jesus says, “Which is easier?” Max Lucado puts it beautifully, **“To heal the man’s body took a simple command; to forgive the man’s sins took Jesus’ blood.** The first was done in the house of friends; the second on a hill with thieves. One took a word; the other took his body. One took a moment; the other took his life....Jesus looks at this man and realizes that the only way for this man to get what his soul truly needs and to make his legs move and to make him dance again, is if Jesus gets His own legs nailed to the cross. Yes, it is far harder to forgive sins.”

May we not seek to make Jesus fit our expectations – whether that about His identity, or about what we think He should do for us. Instead trust Him to do His transforming work in us. Tony Campolo writes about a woman called Nancy. This American woman is crippled and confined to a wheelchair, yet she has embraced a stunning vocation. Nancy runs adverts in the personal section of her local newspaper that read: “If you are lonely or have a problem, call me. I am in a wheelchair and seldom get out. We can share our problems with each other. Just call. I'd love to talk”. The results have been amazing. Each week at least thirty people contact Nancy and she spends her days counselling and comforting people. When asked how she became crippled she replied that she had tried to commit suicide! She went on to explain, “I was living alone. I had no friends. I hated my job, and I was constantly depressed. I decided to jump from the window of my apartment, but instead of being killed I ended up in the hospital paralyzed from my waist down. The second night I was there **Jesus appeared to me and told me that I'd had a healthy body and a crippled soul but from then on I would have a crippled body and a healthy soul.** I gave my life to Christ right there and then. When I got out of the hospital I tried to think of how a woman like me in a wheelchair could do some good, and I came up with the idea of putting the ad in the newspaper. And the rest, as they say, is history.”

The Pharisees **couldn’t accept that Jesus was who he claimed to be.** Let’s not imitate them. The crowd were probably **shocked that Jesus didn’t do what they thought he should do.** Let’s not imitate them. The man on the stretcher came with his need, and **with trust in the wisdom of Jesus.** Let’s imitate him. Jesus said to him, “Your sins are forgiven...your soul is set free for eternity.” Let’s receive Him today.

Study

Read Luke 5: 17-26. Place yourself in the position of the crowd, the Pharisees, the paralysed man. How do you relate to each of those groups? Which is the strongest perspective in you? What might God say to you? How will you respond?

Be ready with an answer: How do these Scriptures reveal Jesus’ identity and self-understanding? John 5: 16-27; John 10: 25-39; John 14: 9-14.

Living it out (Application)

How do you need to allow Jesus to be Lord, without any prior conditions from you?