

Sunday 8th July 2018 My Grace is Sufficient
2 Corinthians 12:9 Mark 6:1-13

Jesus went back to his home town.

He had been travelling around the area; preaching, teaching, healing people, and he went back home. Back to the place where people knew him, knew his family - his parents and his siblings. The place where he had grown up, where he had played with the children and been to school, where he had worked as a carpenter.

And, on the sabbath, he went to the synagogue where he would have been known too, and began to teach those gathered there.

Those that heard him were astounded at the wisdom with which he spoke and at the power with which he performed miracles with his hands.

But then they turned their attention away from the astonishing and unexpected things onto those things that they were familiar and safe with. They focussed on humanness of the man in front of them and 'took offence at him'

They took their eyes off the awesome and with a lack of faith, and maybe with a lack of understanding or even with a hint of jealousy, they focussed on the normal, on the expected, on the things they knew and understood.

They dismissed what they had seen and experienced and noticed - all that had initially astonished them with his teaching and healing and normalised everything by focussing on those human aspects that they could comprehend.

Don't we all do that sometimes... when things are too incredible for us, if we can't explain something, then we try to make it in to something that we can understand, that we can grasp, and maybe sometimes we even ignore it.

Give e.g.... little boy on TP - everything orange would float because of orange arm bands

Familiarity clouds our view point, it changes what and how we see things

We tend to see what we expect or assume will be there and we are often slow to accept challenges to our pre-conceived assumptions

I wonder if, overnight, all the traffic lights changed from red amber and green to blue purple and orange how many of us would actually notice? Or would we not notice because we would see in our minds what we expected to be there because it had always been there?

This is what the people of Jesus' home town did with him and it curtailed Jesus' ability to do deeds of power, except heal a few people !!!

Not because Jesus was unable to... not because he no longer had the power

But because the people there had no faith and had no expectancy of what he would do. Maybe they stopped asking

Imagine what would have happened if the people of last weeks reading had not acted in faith
Jairus' daughter would not have been raised to live

The woman who had been haemorrhaging for 12 years would not have been healed

Wasn't it worth them taking the risk in order to see the miraculous works of power of Jesus

Whom or what do we take for granted? What wisdom or deeds of God's power are we missing because we have preconceived ideas of how things will be? Or we lack the faith to ask.

I went away on my own this year. I was very happy to do so and wasn't worried about it but I knew that if I didn't have people to talk with for 2 weeks I may go a little stir crazy! So on the train to Gatwick I prayed that God would give me some good people to talk with during the 2 weeks. On several evenings I went for dinner with different people, there was another lady there for a week also on her own and we chatted a lot... she nearly fell off the sun bed when I told her I was a Vicar!!! And even queuing to check in my bags on the way home there was a lovely couple from Portsmouth who I had a really good chat with. I could put all this down to co-incidences. OR I could see those people as an answer to my prayers that God provided me with over the 2 weeks

Last year as a church God blessed us in our finances. We had decided to give 2% of our income away specifically to mission which we did - £1250 to EveryLife in Kenya (Georgie is coming back for a few weeks at end of July so hopefully she will be able to share with us when she is at some point) and we still covered all our outgoings and paid more towards our Parish Share than we have done before. Do we just dismiss all that as routine? As the norm? Or do we see God at work in that and thank Him for His provision

And do we then leave it there? Or do we, in faith, pray and ask for His provision for all we need again this year?

What do we take for granted? or normalise? or ignore because we do not understand it?

How often do we take our eyes off the divine and focus on the human? Because in some ways that is more comfortable.

How often do we then, probably unconsciously, miss God at work?

I hope that by now you will all have heard, and recognise, the phrase Partnership for Missional Church, even if you are not yet sure what it means.

Here at St George's we have committed ourselves to a 3 - 4 year journey with other churches in the Diocese on something called Partnership for Missional Church. You will be hearing more about it as the weeks go by and I hope get involved in many and varied different ways

One aspect of that journey is to begin to notice more where God is at work. He is alive. He is interested in us and the world in which we live. And He is at work. He was at work in Jesus but those who knew Jesus well from childhood did not notice that God was at work through him. And they missed out. Jesus could not do his usual deeds of power in that town.

Wouldn't it be awful to miss out on what God is doing in us and in our community?

Let's learn together to notice more where He is and what He is doing

Back to our reading for today...Jesus then went on to call, send, authorise and instruct his 12 disciples to go and proclaim the good news of Jesus and heal the sick

This was something new. They were the first missionaries if you like, the first ones that we actually told to go and tell others

He and they knew the potential for rejection. Jesus had just experienced it. But he sent them nevertheless.

How did he send them?

- In 2's... maybe for mutual encouragement
- With almost nothing...just the basics of a staff (to help their walking and protection against wild animals) and with one tunic
- Nothing to eat, nothing to carry and no money

Jesus was sure that people would offer sufficient hospitality but he did warn them that if they were not welcomed then they were to shake off the dust from their shoes and go on somewhere else.

Jesus had been 'powerless' to do more miracles because the people were unwilling to believe the great things he could do

Jesus warned the 12 disciples about this because lack of faith is not just a passive obstacle but it can be an active problem. Lack of faith is not something neutral. It actually hinders the work of God!

It was easier for the people of Jesus home town to invest in the social norms and conventions and things with which they were familiar, than it was to act in faith

And without acting in faith they missed out

It can be scary. We can doubt. We can wonder if it is really possible

It is easy to revert back to the conventions and norms of our day rather than have faith in the astounding love and power of Jesus

But then he is curtailed and we miss out.

In the reading from Corinthians Paul writes the beautiful words that the Lord had said to him

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" 2 Cor 12:9

God understands our human doubt, he understands our fear of looking daft or being made a fool of

But if we succumb to that and not live in faith of an all loving, all powerful, all seeing and all knowing, living God, then our lack of faith curtails the works of power and wisdom that God can do. And we miss out on seeing those

So lets all seek to grow in faith... it is a muscle that needs exercising in order to grow stronger, and pray that God will help us notice when and where he is a work so that we can celebrate with him and those he is working with.

Amen