

Suggested Outline for Family Worship – Sunday 10th May 2020

Good morning everyone! I hope you're keeping well and thank you for joining us this week as we spend some time together as families and individuals in worship. We're still in lockdown, though there's talk of the restrictions being eased over the next wee while but we hope you're keeping well and finding ways to 'enjoy' the time we have in our homes these days. We also hope you'll find the contents of this morning's family worship meaningful and helpful as we follow this outline in our various home settings.

Please continue to look out for others, especially folks living close by who are on their own.

If you've got internet access, here's a song to enjoy together – it's a great song of praise that declares "How great is our God!" You can watch/listen/join in by clicking this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEm9bDwPQPs>

If you don't have internet access, please play a suitable track from one of your CDs.

Please pray together, thanking God for being such a great God, wrapping himself in light and holding time in his hands. Ask him to be with us as we read and think about what he says to us through the Bible passage we're looking at this morning.

Bible Reading: Acts 3:1-10

If there's more than one of you, maybe you could take it in turn to read a verse or two each?

If you have internet access, please click on the link which will take you to our Facebook page where you will find a video from Peter that includes the Devotion and a prayer. The video can be found here: www.facebook.com/muckamorepc

If you don't have internet access, here's Peter's Devotion for you to read:

"Making a difference" – Acts 3:1-10

Thursday evenings - 8 o'clock – time to go out and show our appreciation for the health and social care workers of the NHS. It's become a weekly event for so many in the UK and it has brought neighbours together in a warmth of gratitude and respect for the people who are on the frontline of caring for others with Covid-19. There's a tremendous amount of good-will being shown within our society these days and it's great to see the thoughtfulness towards the elderly and vulnerable in our society and the many volunteer helpers in community support groups and foodbanks – will all this continue once things get back to normal do you think? I hope so – but human nature being what it is, it doesn't fill me with much confidence, I'm afraid. We all too easily slip back into old ways when a crisis is over – don't we? So why should it be any different this time?

And yet, as former PCI Moderator, Dr Trevor Morrow refers to in a video he recently published online in which he seeks to answer the question: "What is God saying to us at this time", the results of a recent survey of some 4343 adults conducted by YouGov around the UK in April suggest there might just be cause for hope! The survey shows that fewer than 10% of the people interviewed want a full return to how things were before the pandemic – isn't that amazing? More than 90% of them don't want to go back to the way things were! 51% said they'd noticed cleaner air, and 27% said they'd recognised more wildlife since the lockdown began. 40% said they felt a stronger sense of community in their local area since the virus shut down "normal" life, while 39% said they'd been more in touch with friends

and family. 42% said they now valued food more – with 10% sharing with a neighbour for the first time. That’s all really good, isn’t it?

What about you – do you want things to go back to the way they were before the lockdown? The busyness, the pressure, the little time for family or friends? And that’s just the personal side of things – what about the community and others? The look after no.1; the spend, spend, spend; the all take and no give that leads to the neglect of the elderly and vulnerable – like the 40-something year old disabled man who sat begging beside the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem as Peter and John went there to pray. The same attitude that dominates our society today was equally prevalent back then. Because of his disability he couldn’t work to provide for himself and so he was left to beg on the streets, finding an ideal spot beside the gate of the Temple where hundreds of religious people passed by every day – they, of all people, would surely be a good source of help? That’s what disability does to people, isn’t it? Leaves them needing handouts from others; a drain on society; a burden on their families and the care sector. Couldn’t the money spent on services for disabled people be spent in much better ways? Sadly, that’s how many people see it these days, which is why the new abortion legislation being proposed for NI includes provisions on foetal abnormality that will have a disproportionate impact on those with disabilities despite the fact that over 80% of those who responded to the recent consultation disagreed with its introduction. And yet, thankfully, when you listen to the people who work on projects such as DIY SOS, you hear a different side of things as they speak about *the privilege* of helping to transform a home so that it’s suitable for a family who, 9 times out of 10, is trying to care for someone with disabilities. The message is clear: as Nick Knowles puts it at the end of each show – “Maybe you know someone who needs your help”.

You see, the truth is - *if we’re honest enough to admit it* - money can’t solve every problem; simply throwing money at it doesn’t always work. Take the man sitting at the Temple gate the day Peter and John were going to pray. The years of begging had resigned him to the idea that some kind person *might just* give him a few coins with which he could buy bread to feed himself. That was it; that was as far as his hopes went. He’d got used to begging from people. He was just trying to survive; just trying to get by. A small sum of money was all he needed.

I wonder if he ever prayed as he sat outside the Temple? If he did, I wonder what he asked for? *“Lord, let me have a good day today. Send someone who’ll take pity on me, Lord, somebody who’s wealthy and generous who’ll maybe take me into their home and provide for me so that I don’t have to come here anymore to beg. Send someone, Lord. Please”*. Maybe he’d stopped praying because he never got what he asked for – like some of us, perhaps. Maybe he’d got fed up saying the same thing everyday to God and had decided it wasn’t worth the effort - I don’t know. But one thing I do know: this man got more than he ever expected to receive when he asked Peter and John for money. *“I don’t have any money”*, said Peter, *“but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”* Peter gave him something totally unexpected – not just the ability to walk – he gave him a new life! He was set free from all that had kept him isolated and locked-down for the whole of his life to date as Peter gave him the only thing he had that was worth giving – the transforming love and power of Jesus. Money couldn’t provide what he *really* needed – it never has for anybody and it never will. Think about it: for all our government’s good intentions when it comes to the health service and welfare state, has it been able to produce a society in which people are properly valued, treated with dignity, cared for with compassion and enabled to find fulfilment and purpose in life? And past experience tells us that much of the generosity and kind-heartedness being shown to others in these days of lockdown will evaporate pretty quickly when the restrictions are lifted and life gets back to ‘normal’.

But that's where men, women and young people who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ come in. Like Peter and John, we have the love - and power – of Jesus within us through God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. We've been set free by God; set free from our sin and selfishness and given new life in Jesus as the Holy Spirit makes the radical changes within us that are necessary for us to be able to live the way we were created to live – loving God and loving one another; not living as we please but as it pleases God! And it pleases him to look after the poor and the needy. How do I know that? Deut 15:11 says *"I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in your land"*. I command you – it's not a request. God's pattern for our daily living is that we show compassion for others; we have a God-given responsibility to care for the poor and needy in society. We could never do this on our own; left to our own devices, there'd be a handful of times in our lives when we'd be able to break through our innate selfishness to help others. But as God's Spirit moulds and shapes us to be more and more like Jesus, he sets us free from the world of consumerism and self-centredness that makes us even more selfish and unloving with every day that passes.

It was just an ordinary day - but Peter and John took notice of what was happening around them and found a chance for God to reveal something of his grace. What could we make of an ordinary day in the office, in the school, on the farm, in the factory, in the shop – wherever we see people in need – in need of practical help; in need of comfort, of assurance, of forgiveness, of Jesus? Are we walking around with our eyes open or closed? If someone were to ask us for help, would we see it as an opportunity for something remarkable to begin in them and for them? We have the power, in Jesus, to make it possible for a new story to begin in the people around us.

When this lockdown period is over and life gets back to 'normal', will we become so busy again that we won't have time to look around for opportunities to help other people? Maybe what God wants most for us is to be more aware of his Spirit, aware of his nudges, aware of his prompts so that we hear what he's saying to us in the very ordinary stuff of life, just the ordinary everyday encounters, because that's where we can make a difference... showing the difference that Jesus makes to our lives by making a difference in other people's. Maybe you know somebody who needs your help?

Now watch/listen/sing along with this song in which we say: "Stir us to action, filled with your passion" – it's called "Filled with compassion and here's the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxx0EN6Bqdc>

If you don't have internet access, please play a suitable track from one of your CDs.

Please pray for others as you finish, continuing to remember everyone working in the health service together with staff and residents in residential care homes that have been hit so hard by Covid-19. Pray that many people will be restored to good health, including those with other forms of illness, too, and remember all who've been bereaved as a result of the virus or other natural causes or circumstances. Ask for guidance for everyone in government, the scientists advising them and for a speedy recovery of the economy when restrictions are lifted.

Thanks for following this outline for Family Worship – may you know God's presence and sustaining grace with you in the week ahead.

Activity for Children: (thanks, Hayley!)

‘Where will you be this time tomorrow?’

Do you remember that I asked some people this question in Church a few months ago? They told us where they would be on Monday morning and what they would be doing. The people that talked to us told us that they would be in work, or in school and the different people they would be spending time with, and for many of them, this was just their ‘normal’, the things that they were used to doing every day and every week. What if we asked that question now, what if we asked you that question?

Ask your children:

- 1) Where will you be this time tomorrow, and what will you be doing?

For most of us, we now have a ‘new normal’ answer: we will be at home. For some other children, they’re maybe still going to school because their parents are working very hard to keep us safe and look after us, but school looks very different for them at the moment. We are now working out what our ‘new normal’ looks like and maybe that includes schoolwork, playing outside, baking, colouring, gardening and lots of other brilliant things that I know you have been doing.

A few weeks ago, we read from the bible that after he rose again, Jesus told his disciples to tell and show people what he had done for them and that they were to do that in their every-day ‘normal’ lives. We’re going to watch a video on YouTube based on Acts 3:1-10 where we see just that, we see God work through his people in their every day, normal lives. I encourage you to both watch the video and then read the passage for yourselves.

Saddleback Kids – Peter Heals a lame beggar <https://youtu.be/orp4ZT9710Y>

Ask your children:

- 1) Where were Peter & John going?
- 2) What does it show about God that he can work through us, even when we are just doing our ‘normal things’?
- 3) What can we use in our ‘normal’ days to show God’s love to others?
- 4) Who are these people?

Our God is so powerful and he has promised to be with his children to help them all the time to show and tell other people that God loves them, that he dies for them, that he rose again and is greater than anything else and he wants to be with them forever and turn their lives from empty to full. Even though our normal might be different at the moment that doesn’t stop him from being able to work through us.

We are going to take something so ordinary and use some of our ‘normal’ every-day activities to show and tell others these incredible true things:

Take a white piece of plain paper and use it to draw, write, decorate or paint on incredible encouragements. These can be bible verses, or maybe some words from your favourite song or anything that you can think of, to show and tell others this amazing news of who God is and how much he loves his children. Then when you are finished find somewhere to stick it up, maybe this will be in your window, or your front door, or the fence, anywhere that people might see it.

We look forward to seeing everyone’s ‘normal’ & ‘ordinary’ pieces of paper being used to share the amazing truth of God and his Son Jesus. Please send in your pictures to Hayley (07598329604) and they will be shared on the Church Facebook page as another way to encourage so many people.