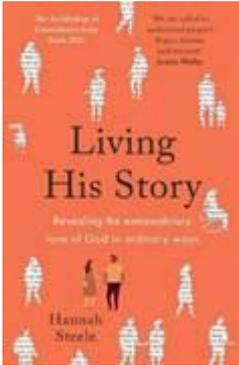


Dear all



Our second session of the **Lent Course** continued to be as challenging as the first. We discussed what is the *evangel*, the ‘Good News’, and why it is good news. This is fundamental to our motivation for sharing, as well as for our own spiritual well-being. We decided that the word ‘witnessing’ was perhaps preferable to ‘evangelism’, as it carries less baggage with it.

I posed the question what is it about the church that is more than one could get from any other organisation e.g., the WI, or a golf club? We decided it was the spiritual element – knowing and experiencing the love of God. But we could not say that we lived with that awareness to the forefront every minute of our life! And that’s OK!! We do have dark times in our lives... or just very ordinary moments. But it could help to ‘count our blessings’ – what has God done for me today?

We were introduced to the idea of the *missio dei*, the work or the mission of God. It is God’s work; the Holy Spirit is the true evangelist. Our role is to come alongside God, and do our bit as and when we are able.

In the parable of the sower, the sower is extravagant, flinging seed all over the place, even where there appears to be no hope of success. Sometimes the seed we sow may take years, literally, to germinate and produce a crop (the writer gave an example of 15 years). The task is a community task – others may harvest the seed we have sown; we may never know. And it is cumulative – each little bit can add up over time.

It is important to realise that we don’t have to mention Jesus in every conversation – just where it is a natural part of our life. And, if we see the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who actually does the ‘evangelism’, the conversion, we must not think that WE have failed if there are no obvious results.

We are encouraged to be ‘display’ people – the question is what do we display?

I was reminded of a song by the late Larry Norman, the ‘Godfather’ of Jesus Music. *When you know a pretty story, you don’t let it go unsaid. You tell it to your children as you tuck them into bed. And when you know a wonderful secret, you tell it to your friends. Because a lifetime filled with happiness is like a street that never ends. Sing that sweet, sweet song of salvation... and let them know that Jesus really cares.* (It is of its time!)

[Larry Norman - Sweet Sweet Song of Salvation ~ \[Lyrics\] - YouTube](#)

A reminder that the Lent Course will take place on Zoom, Thursdays 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1MnI0bjJZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

Service details for this coming Sunday, Lent 2.

Readings – Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16; Romans 4: 13-end; Psalm 22: 23-end; Mark 8: 31-end.

Hymns: Take up thy cross; Will you come and follow me?

Something from Hilfield Friary:

For Lent this year the Hilfield Community are taking on a discipline to be more aware of and connected to the natural world around us and you are all invited to join in wherever you are.

Everyone has chosen a species or group of species to notice, cherish, pray for and learn about each day for the 40 days. Which species will you choose?

Nick Fawcett has offered the following prayer adapted from a prayer in his book *Intercessions for a Hurting World*.

For the sick and suffering

Lord of all,
we remember today those who are sick.
We think of those suffering from minor illnesses,
not serious or life threatening,
but nonetheless unpleasant,
dragging the sufferer down
and undermining their health and happiness.
We remember especially in a moment of quietness those
known to us.

Pause for silent reflection

Bring help.

Bring healing.

We think of those with more serious conditions –
waiting perhaps for a diagnosis or operation,
wrestling with acute or chronic conditions,
coming to terms with cancer or the onset of dementia,
facing the prospect of aggressive and debilitating treatment
or a long and gradual decline.

Again, we pause to remember those known to us.

Pause for silent reflection

Bring help.

Bring healing.

We think of those who are terminally ill,
confronted by the stark reality of death,
fearful of what they might have to endure
and grieving at the prospect of leaving loved ones behind –
desperately hoping against hope that some new treatment
might be found.

We pause again to remember those we know in special
need at this time.

Pause for silent reflection

Bring help.

Bring healing.

We think of those whose lives have been overturned during this past year
by Covid-19;
those who have suffered and died,
those who still struggle with the after-effects of the illness;

those who have lost loved ones as a result;
those in our hospitals and health centres
exhausted by the demands made upon them;
those who have developed vaccines and treatments,
or who continue to work upon them,
and those whose job it is to organise and roll out the vaccination programme.
those in governments and positions in leadership,
seeking to take right decisions for the present and the future;
those whose livelihoods have been undermined,
even destroyed,
by the economic impact of lockdowns and the like;
those facing years of unemployment
and an uncertain future,
as a result of the pandemic's impact.

Pause for silent reflection

Bring help.

Bring healing.

We think of those who minister to the sick:
GPs and health professionals,
doctors and nurses,
surgeons and consultants,
together with all who seek to minister to mind
as well as body,
offering emotional and practical support.
Through their work bring relief and comfort,
strength and succour,
health and wholeness.

Pause for silent reflection

Bring help.

Bring healing.

Amen.



My new mug. No further comment needed!

I saw this on Facebook recently:

A man dies and goes to heaven. St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates and says, 'Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in.'

'Okay,' the man says, 'I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart.'

'That's wonderful,' says St. Peter, 'that's worth two points!'

'Two points?!' he says.

'Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service.'

'Terrific!' says St. Peter. 'That's certainly worth a point.'

'One point!?'

'I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans.'

'Fantastic, that's good for two more points,' he says.

'Two points?!?!'

'Exasperated, the man cries. 'At this rate the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God.'

'Bingo! 100 points! Come on in!'

Today's musical offerings (apologies for adverts – it's how they are able to make content free!):

Firstly, the Psalm for this Sunday, Anglican chant (NB Sunday section starts at 4:14).

[Psalm 22: My God, my God, look upon me - YouTube](#)

And, for total contrast... (NB Sunday section starts at 4:18).

[Psalm 22 \(Why Have You Forsaken Me?\) \(feat. Jon DeGroot\) - The Psalms Project \(feat. Phil Keaggy\) - YouTube](#)

There is also a recording of the opening of the Psalm (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?) sung in Hebrew, over images of the holocaust. Warning: the images are very disturbing... and so they should be!

[Psalm 22 Holocaust Lament - YouTube](#)

Anthems recommended for this Sunday include:

The Call by Ralph Vaughan Williams

[Five Mystical Songs: The Call \[baritone only\] - YouTube](#)

And O nata lux by Morton Lauridsen

[Lauridsen: O Nata Lux - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark