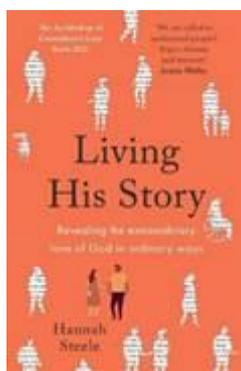


Dear all

Tomorrow is Mothering Sunday. I'm not going to say much, so that I don't pre-empt what Sonia might say in her sermon tomorrow. Suffice it to say that Mothering Sunday was originally a celebration of Mother Church, when people, especially those in service had a day (or half-day) off, and would go to their own church.

Next Sunday, 21st March, we will be opening for public worship again, at 10.00am. It will be like a belated Mothering Sunday, when we can come back to Mother Church, and be a physical community once again. There will, of course, be the usual restrictions we had in place earlier – masks, hand sanitation, physical distancing etc. But we can celebrate the opportunity to get back together. Perhaps it is particularly appropriate that the Sunday is Passion Sunday, as we look to how God in Christ shares in the suffering of the world.



Our fourth session of the **Lent Course** took as a starting point Jesus' style of evangelism – WWJD, what would Jesus do?

The starting point was that everyone can see in Jesus' ministry in the gospels something of the way that we might approach sharing the faith – all personality types have a different, but equally valid way of evangelising. The way we engage with people is deeply personal and individual. One size does not fit all! There is a danger in seeking a generic approach.

Hannah noted how often it is much easier to enthuse about a TV programme that we enjoyed – it just seems to bubble out. This happens in the context of friendship, which is how it is best to have conversations about our faith. Statistically the second most common way people come to faith is through conversations (the first is being brought up in a Christian home).

Jesus related to many who were 'outsiders' in society, and he related in their terms, using their language. We were challenged to consider how many people we have contact with outside of the church family.

In Mark 10:21, when he meets the rich young man, it was noted that Jesus loved him – the encounter and subsequent conversation comes from a position of love and compassion for a person.

In the encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 Jesus approaches the woman, but from a position of vulnerability, of being open to receive as well as to give (in this case he was thirsty). Moving on from this, Hannah emphasised the importance of being receptive – to learn, not just to give all the answers.

In the healing of blind Bartimaeus, and the paralysed man at the pool, in both occasions, Jesus asks the man "what do you want?". It is important to know the real person, not just the stereotype. Ask questions, find out what matters, what are the obstacles to belief. For example, if someone says "how can I believe in God when there is so much suffering?", a good response, rather than to get in a philosophical argument, is to ask "why do you ask that?". It might result in an important personal story.

Finally, Jesus' responses were always restorative and full of grace, not simply to win an argument.

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=STVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1Mnl0bjJZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

Service details for this coming Sunday, Mothering Sunday (Lent 4).

Readings – Exodus 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Psalm 34: 11-20; John 19:25b-27.

Hymns: God of Eve, and God of Mary; Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers.

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.

[Psalm 34 - YouTube](#)

And, for total contrast...

The Sons of Korah version.

[Psalm 34 ~ Sons of Korah - YouTube](#)

Psalm 34:8 – O taste and see by Ralph Vaughan Williams

[Ralph Vaughan Williams: O taste and see | The Choir of Somerville College, Oxford - YouTube](#)

The poet Malcolm Guite has provided a poem for each Psalm, reflecting on its meaning for him. Here is his reflection on Psalm 34.

[To See Good Days: A response to Psalm 34 | Malcolm Guite \(wordpress.com\)](#)

There are many versions of Mary's song 'The Magnificat' – do Google them. I would like to offer the following:

John Michael Talbot has a musical meditation on some images of the Madonna and child.

[John Michael Talbot " Magnificat" - YouTube](#)

Bach Magnificat: [Bach - Magnificat BWV 243 - Van Veldhoven | Netherlands Bach Society - YouTube](#)

And a classic Anglican version – Stanford in G.

[Stanford: Magnificat in G \(King's College Choir, Cambridge\) - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark