

SERMON FOR DISCUSSION: The importance of "to loose"

Mark 7 v31-37

I wonder if you ever had a favourite text book?

When I was at School it was "Lipseys on Economics"

Such books have special memories, do they not?

And one in particular for me. Because when Ruth & I married we bought our first matrimonial home, a small flat, from a Dr Wenham. Amazing because his father was WENHAM. We couldn't believe it. It was like buying a flat from David Beckham! Because WENHAM was a famous vicar, a Keswick speaker and he had written THE book that EVERY student at Theological College had to use. Everyone had a WENHAM! Wenham was famous and revered.

And here is WENHAM! (Well, the book at least!) Well thumbed, well worn.

It's a Greek text book. And Wenham begins with:

luw lueis luei luomen luete luousin

So the first Greek verb I ever learned was *luw*

-which is the verb TO LOOSE.

Its original meaning was agricultural. A farmer would 'loose' a pair of oxen from their yoke at the end of a days work so both oxen were free to roam and feed.

But in the New Testament it is used for a deeper kind of freedom.

The freedom which healing and salvation brings.

So, in today's Gospel, Mark 7 we read:

³² And they brought unto Jesus one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to put his hand upon him.

³⁴and Jesus saith unto him that was deaf, 'Ephphatha' that is, Be Opened.

³⁵ And straightway his ears were opened, **and the string of his tongue was loosed**, and he spake plain.

"And the string of his tongue was ***eluthay*** (from *luw*) was loosed."

He was 'loosed' from being deaf and dumb and was freed to live a full life.

Jesus made him whole by "loosing" him from what bound him.

LUW crops up time and again at important points in the N.T.

And why do I say all this?

(2)

Because on Tuesday 'the next Archbishop of Canterbury', or York!, the present Vicar of St Martin's in the Fields, Sam Wells, said on Radio 4 that the first Greek verb he ever learnt was, like me, *luw* and presumably he had Wenham, too!

But he went on to link it with the resurrection with a particular connection with dementia. And as yesterday was our first "*Singing for the Brain*" in the Parish Rooms, I pass it on as topical.

I am not saying "This is the Word of the Lord" I merely share it for you reflection and thought.

He acknowledged that dementia is a terrible disease, a time of agony and despair and he didn't belittle it. And nor do I, for my Father had dementia for 7 years -but Sam Wells said this:

"We want to keep as much of the person we love for as long as we can. We react as if they are falling over the side of a boat – and hold on for dear life.

***BUT* the lesson of the little word *LUW* is that maybe A BETTER PATH lies in letting go, in LETTING LOOSE, in allowing to roam free.**

If death is starting now, MAYBE RESURRECTION can start now, too.

By letting go of what our loved one WAS, **we can begin to receive who they ARE NOW.**

Only in finding ways to enjoy **who they are now** can we reverse the decline, because we stop insisting they're moving away from something good **and start to realise they're moving INTO SOMETHING NEW.**

Yes, dementia is difficult, **but it could become an invitation** to see how we can REMAIN the same person **AND YET take on new and rather different characteristics.**

In this sense it's training for a kind of resurrection – **in which we're changed, BUT STILL RECOGNISABLY OURSELVES.**

GOD loses us; **BUT CONTINUES to enjoy us and cherish us.**

The challenge for us of dementia is to find ways that WE can do the same."

(3)

So said Dr Sam Wells but, in truth, the lesson of the little word *LUW* **applies far wider** than just dementia.

We live in *a world* that “hangs on for dear life” for as long as it can to happiness and pleasure and ‘living the dream’ thinking it is the way to fulfilment when all the time Jesus is saying, “*Take up your cross, deny yourself and follow me.*” (Matthew 16 v24)

It is in “dying” (dying to self, losing ourselves from ourselves) that we find eternal life.

luw lueis luei luomen luete luousin I learnt long ago from a famous text book and never realised how profound a concept they express:

God’s will is to loose us so we can be free.

Preached by Martin Tanner in St Mary’s
at 10.00am on Thursday 24th September 2015