



What is God saying?

Bridget Down shares her reflections on a recent time of child-led worship and how her children responded to what they'd heard from God through art.

In the stripping away of the rhythm of Sunday's, our family quickly adopted the curiosity and wonder of the children. This seemed the natural thing to do: to be real and engaging. It wasn't forced but organic, and has helped us all value the sacred in our lockdown environment.

Each Sunday we've encouraged the children to take turns holding the attention of the family to bring a sense of focus on a theological awareness of their choosing, to encourage us all to hear, see, feel God in the sacred space created. There has been such a spectrum of ideas, spaces and mediums used – it's been brilliant!

This week our youngest, Barney who is eight, took us on a trail from our house to a redundant mobile home that lies dormant on our farm. As it was evening he asked us to follow a lamp he had found with a candle lit.

As we followed him the lit candle and melted wax swung around the lantern. The excitement of the adventure made the moment special; it stood apart from the normality of the day we had lived.

Into the caravan we trooped – directed to our seats, full of dust and mites! Our 'leader' sat at a rickety table set up with the lantern as a focus. 'Oh no' the Bible had been forgotten on the journey...but never fail one of the teenage children had it on their phone! Zacchaeus was the chosen story, a favourite with our children (told and retold numerous times over the years). But today it was different, as the messed up candle, splattered against the lantern tried to shine its light, our youngest gave us two questions to think about: 'Why should we hide from God?' and 'Why shouldn't we hide from God?' At first I struggled to see the link he had made to ask these questions, but by the end I was thankful for this moment of new insight, seen through a different lens, to such a well-rehearsed passage.

He gave us time to think about these answers and then asked us to feedback. I was itching to correct from the beginning of the first enquiry, forcing myself to hold back the words. Everyone in that moment silent in thought, scribbling answers on the scraps of recycled paper we had been given. Barney's dedication to writing full sentences with his reply; determination on his face, tongue slightly out, signifying the importance he bestowed.

As we each shared our answers in turn, it became very apparent each person had reflected on this story, this moment differently. I hadn't answered the first question, in my mind – hiding from God is not a possibility, but the depth of answer from our four small companions were deep, raw and real. This seemingly impossible question did in fact have an answer.

To end our time together we were told we'd be playing a game of hide and seek - in the mobile home! Again my doubt of how this would go was soon brutally disposed with the instruction: "Mummy' you will count to 20. You need to go outside to do that". As I disappeared I could hear the thumping of running and panic as the remaining five all found their hiding places. On my return all was eerily quiet in the caravan, too quiet for our troop!

I found two children who had made half an effort to hide quite quickly, my husband squiggled himself into a caravan wardrobe, another child was under the sink but where was Barney? Finally he was found under the 'sofa'. We congregated afterwards to be dismissed with a prayer, direct from the heart, very much in the present, as the words reflected our time together "God help us to shine out to you, even if we are a bit messed up like this candle, help us not to try and hide our naughty things we've done, Amen"

The children have spoken ad-hoc about Sunday since. Jack, who's nine and the easiest to find in our game, sidled up to me yesterday saying "Mum, I was easy to find as you know...you can't hide from God". This comment came out of the blue, with no context: it was simply a moment when he had remembered and wanted to bring the conversation to the surface again, to quickly be replaced with "What's for supper?"

I encouraged us to record our reflections differently, some have tried photography and others paint, all unique and all perfect, if not very conceptual and certainly interpretive! But to the artist incredibly meaningful and they've certainly got me thinking!



Barneys (aged 8) Art..... The Story in Rich colours and in Poor colours "because Zacchaeus was poor until he was found by Jesus"



Jack's Art (aged 9)

'No-one can hide from God not even the men flying to the ISS'

Alfie's Art (aged 11)

'Zacchaeus hid up the tree so he could see Jesus, but he didn't want him to see him as he didn't think he would be wanted by God'

