

Junior Church: Young Peoples' Group
Some Thoughts for the Week Beginning 26th April 2020

Hello Everyone,

I suppose it was back to 'virtual' school this week after the Easter holidays. Perhaps it is good to have something to do and help to provide structure to the day? But I can imagine home learning cannot be the same or as easy as having teachers and classmates around you to give help and encouragement. So, I wish you well with this stage in your learning. I think you are going to have an online Junior Church tomorrow. I'm sorry that my work prevents me from joining you, but I hope it goes well and you enjoy each other's company through the medium of the phone, computer or tablet.

I heard something on the radio this week that got me thinking about the five senses. They are, I suppose, the means with which we engage with and make sense of the world around us. If I was to ask you to write down the [5 senses](#) I wonder in what order you would put them, either in importance or as you remember them: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. If you are like me you might say sight is the most important and the one you would least like to lose, and touch is the one that I have to rack my brain to remember.

That might have changed however with the current pandemic. In the early days of the outbreak I remember touching elbows or feet as the suggested alternative to shaking hands, more in fun than anything else. Now no one is joking. We are more conscious of not touching things and people, washing our hands and, for some of us, wearing gloves to protect us from danger. We are like a magnet with its poles reversed so that when before we would have been drawn to people, to shake hands or to give an embrace, now when I'm out exercising on Earlswood Common I divert myself from the path of anyone coming my way.

Touch is a difficult thing. There are times when it is the most welcome and natural thing to do, even if it is just a handshake, and at other times it may be unwelcome and inappropriate. Getting the signals right can be difficult and is something we learn from experience and from following the lead of people we trust.

What started me thinking about all this was an interview on the radio with a lovely lady who had just lost her husband to the virus and who was struggling with the grieving process when in lockdown. She said everyone had been wonderful and the church had been great but what she craved and could not have was a hug. Touch can bring comfort and reassurance. It can bring a sense of compassion, love or understanding.

In the time of Jesus the dreaded disease was leprosy. It was a disease that resulted in the loss of fingers and toes and caused other disfigurement. It was much misunderstood and thought to be highly contagious. Lepers were feared and kept separate in colonies apart from the rest of society. They were regarded as unclean

and excluded from worship. [In Luke 5 verses 12-14](#) Jesus encounters a leper who pleads to be healed. In what must have been shocking for those who witnessed this event was that Jesus reached out and touched the man.

When we are facing difficult and stressful times our our senses are heightened and the brain is working overtime to process the messages from all 5 senses. In the last two or three weeks we have been reading of the encounters that Jesus had after his death and resurrection with his friends and disciples. In this week's passage from [Luke 24 v 13- 35](#) Jesus appears to Cleopas and his companion as they walk along a road reflecting on all that has happened to them and trying to make sense of it. The overwhelming emotion is sadness to the extent that when Jesus joins them in conversation they do not recognise him. The most fundamental of the senses, their sight, had failed them. That seems incredible that having know Jesus so well they did not recognise him until some time later.

I have heard it said, and I have experienced this myself, that when someone close to you dies you fear that you might not remember what they looked like and, in the panic, the memory fades even further only to return in time. Perhaps there was something of that in the experience of the two disciples, perhaps not, but in stressful times strange things happen.

Only when Jesus shares supper with them and breaks the bread do they recognise Him (verse 31), only for Jesus to immediately disappear from their sight, leaving behind a sense of wonder and excitement. In all of these encounters the senses are put to the test and, if you read on (verse 39) when Jesus appears again to the disciples he invites them to touch Him as the final confirmation that He is real.

Have a great week.

Rodney