

VALUES DAY 2018

WELCOME TO OUR SERVICE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

By Jackie Clarke – Church on the Rock

This is a very broad theme which touches most people in today's society. From Mum's who have the baby blues, to those who feel down: to those who feel frazzled and worn out by our fast paced world: to those who are bewildered and lost by man's inhumanity to man. Those who know the trauma of workplace to be full of accusation and bullying. Those others who are getting older and grieve that their mind and body are not as sharp as it once they were. Those experiencing the weariness of caring for loved ones with dementia. Those suffering bereavement and loss. Those with long term mental health problems, such as schizophrenia and depression. Or just simply knowing that your 'get up and go' has got up and gone! Perhaps you have known the damage of other people calling you names and the embarrassing stigma of this. May you find the voice of our Lord Jesus today as we 'come aside and rest awhile.'

Please feel free to use some or all of these notes as appropriate.

BIBLE READINGS:

Psalm 139 v1-18, 23-24. Lamentations 3 v12-13, 14-26. Philippians 4 v 6-7.

Jesus said 'come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.' If this is you today, may you know the gentle voice of your Lord guiding you to times of refreshment. Our hearts can get burdened and weary by situations in life that we have faced, or that we continue to face each day. The ongoing carrying of burdens or challenges weighs us down and wearies us. Maybe the Lord would gently help us to carry some of those burdens today.

Think about:

Have there been times, or are you currently experiencing immense pressure or strain either at home or in the workplace. Maybe you have felt pushed right to the edge and beyond.

How did you feel? Tired/ weary/ angry/overcome/ sad/weepy?

Feelings are the barometer of soul. They act as a buffer to prevent us from exploding or imploding. It is good to know that our Lord Jesus was a man just as we are, entirely human. He completely understands our human condition, except He was without sin. In the wilderness He was tempted by Satan time and time again. (Matt. 4) He is our example to follow. Sometimes God will allow situations to challenge and stretch our faith, but we can be sure that He is always at our side. He has promised to 'never leave us nor forsake us.' Hebrews 13.5 We may have been going through the wringer. We may not know where to turn, but God is present with us.

We may feel like our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, but He hears the cries of our hearts. The psalmist even says 'He gathers our tears in his wineskins.' Psalm 56.8 Even our tears are precious to God!

He can restore us to health again:

We may find this hard to believe but even after a long time God is able to give us back a measure of health and strength again.

King Nebuchadnezzar has a lot to teach us. We find his story in Daniel chapter 4. He had great wealth, power and all that one could ask for. He thought he was “the bee’s knees”. But when he thought he had it all, God demoted him for seven years. His mental health worsened. He went around in rags. He exhibited animal like tendencies and neglected himself. He even ate grass! Imagine that! His finger and toenails grew like claws. Often self-neglect is a symptom of what is going on inside.

After seven years God restored him to his right mind and to his royal kingdom. The number seven in scripture is associated with God’s royal plan for kingdoms and for individuals. In this passage we are told that God demoted Nebuchadnezzar for a season. Did this mean that God is able to use even mental health problems for his purposes? This is part of the mystery of how God works in our lives.

JESUS AND LEGION:

Luke 8v22 -25 Jesus quiets a great storm at sea.

Luke 8v 25-40 Jesus quiets Legions a man possessed by demons.

These passages of scripture are linked together. Our Lord is able to quiet a great storm that even frightened hardened fishermen, who no doubt had seen a storm at sea many times. They feared for their lives and cried out to the Lord to save them.

THE PEACEFUL PRESENCE OF JESUS:

Up until that moment Jesus had been asleep in the boat. Such peace in the midst of the storm. Jesus spoke to the storm ‘Be still’. Immediately the storm was becalmed and the waves were small once more. The disciples were mystified as to who this was in their boat, who was able to order the seas and winds to be quiet, in just the same way that a man would talk to his dogs. What great authority and power He showed.

LEGION’S SITUATION:

They were going to the area of Gerasene’s on this boating journey.

Jesus it seems, was going directly to meet a man called Legion. He seemed unafraid and unperplexed, even by this man who was bound by 6000 troops of demonic origin, the Bible suggests.

The words and terminology have perhaps changed since Biblical times, but I would suggest that people can be extremely troubled and overcome by situations, addictions and burdens.

JESUS CAME WHERE LEGION WAS:

I would also venture to suggest that just as Jesus came alongside Legion, and even went out of his way to meet him so Jesus does that today for each of us too.

Legion was hiding in the local cemetery. He pulled off his chains. He was unclothed. His troubles were extremely deep. People were afraid of him. He was mixed up. He screamed when he met Jesus, but he still ran towards him. Perhaps he knew that Jesus was his only hope. Jesus met with the man where he was at. Maybe we think no one can understand us, but Jesus met even with a man in an extreme situation. We are probably not in such an extreme situation as Legion, but Jesus comes near to meet with us at our point of need.

This man was precious to Jesus. He was willing to spend time with him. He helped him to fight those demons. He bought perspective and led him to a point of healing. We are told what happened to the demons. (They went out of the man into the pigs who were grazing nearby.) We are not really told what happened to the man other than he met with the Lord. The scriptural record hides this from us, perhaps so that the man is saved from embarrassment. Was the heart of the matter pain so deep that he was tormented by it? Had he lost a loved one, a child or a parent? Had his life fallen apart? We don't know the real issues, but we do know that Jesus did. The love of Jesus gently led this troubled man to wholeness. He didn't preach AT him, He showed real compassion and love to heal a troubled soul.

HE MET JESUS:

The effect of meeting Jesus is just as dramatic. He is found by the people of the town seated at his Lord's feet, dressed and in his right mind. What a dramatic change this was. It is still worth remembering that Dr Luke wrote about this change and that he himself was truly astonished by it. How we need to know and invite other people to know this message today. When we meet Jesus there is a powerful, but gentle release in our lives. He will put our life back in order again. This may happen in a short time or it may happen over a period of years, or in some instances it may not happen in our earthly lifetime, but by God's grace He is at work in our lives. That invitation of our Lord we thought about at the beginning, is worth reiterating again.

'Come unto me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.' Matt. 11.30

SUGGESTED PRAYER:

We hold before God:

Those for whom life is very difficult;

Those who have difficult decisions to make, and

Who honestly do not know what is the right thing to do.

We hold before God:

Those who have difficult tasks to do and to face,

And who fear they may fail in them;

Those who have difficult temptations to face, and who know only too well that they may fall to them, if they try to meet them alone.

We hold before God:

Those who know that they can be their own worst enemies.

We hold before God:

Those who have difficult people to work with; those who have to suffer unjust treatment, unfair criticism, and unappreciated work.

We hold before God:

Those who are sad because someone they loved has died;

And any who are disappointed in something for which they hoped very much. Amen.

William Barclay, Celtic Daily Prayer, Collins, 2005.

SUGGESTED HYMNS:

- Blessed be your name in the land that is plentiful
- Father I place into your hands the way that I should go.
- Be still for the presence of the Lord.
- May the mind of Christ my Saviour dwell in me from day to day.

A POEM:

Casting all your care upon God, for He careth for you

Come heavy souls, oppressed that are
With doubts, and fears and care.
Lay all your burdens down and see
There's one that carried once a tree
Upon his back, and, which is more,
A heavier weight, your sins, he bore.
Think then how easily he can
Your sorrows bear that's God and man;
Think too how willingly He's to take
Your care on Him, who for your sake
Sweat bloody drops, prayed, fasted, cried,

Was bound, scourged, mocked and crucified.

He that so much for you did do,

Will do yet more, and care for you.

Thomas Washbourne 1606-87

How can I protect my own mental health?

Learn to use the powerful tool of just saying NO!

Find out what creative abilities YOU have, and let them flow.

Spending a little time in recreation, protects our minds from always being at work.

Simplify the demands on daily life as much as possible. (Is more money essential or could I live on less more happily?)

The real secret however, is daily time with our Lord in prayer and Bible study.

Crosswords, word searches, colouring etc. have also been proven to protect our mind.

HOW CAN I BE A FRIEND TO SOMEONE FEELING LOW?

Flowers, chocolate and a nice meal may be appreciated.

A friendly phone call, sometimes on a daily or weekly basis.

Offer to do chores or give a lift.

Be prepared for the long haul.

Never use the terms 'snap out of it.' or 'You should be over it by now.'

Keep on keeping on.

'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Gal. 6.2

Get professional help if the concerns are worsening. From your local G.P., counsellor or mental health professional. Sometimes, those who are struggling may have little insight to their health, and early action can improve the situation considerably.

There are resources to help, so look on line for those local to you.