



Section News

09 JUNE 2021

Reflection

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CJ4A

Superintendent's Thoughts

BIBLE MONTH – WEEK 2 – MARK 4:1 – 8:21 – Mission and Boundaries



In this section of Mark's gospel, we have a record of Jesus' teaching both through parables and through practical action. The common link is the surprise that comes at the end of each episode, but which seems difficult for many who were present to grasp at the time.

- Crops increasing their yield to levels that farmers can only dream of
- Stilling storms and walking on water
- Feeding thousands with what appears to be completely insufficient

To add further confusion, Jesus tells his listeners that the parables are intended to "obscure rather than reveal". The Bible Month material for this week invites us to consider the following question:

*"Is the **intention** of Jesus' teaching to drive people away or its **consequence**?"*

I think most of us would rightly challenge an understanding that Jesus deliberately tried to drive people away, but we need to look at the original verses that are quoted in Isaiah (6:9-10). They come as part of the sending out of Isaiah to bring the word of God to the people of Israel. Isaiah is told that the people should be left in darkness until the time is right for them to understand. We wait for three chapters until Isaiah declares that the people "who walked in darkness have seen a great light". The prophecy surrounding the coming Messiah is then declared which the Christian tradition sees fulfilled in Jesus. There is a second recurrent theme of "hardened hearts" in both the Isaiah and Mark verses, which raises the question in my mind as to whether that is the situation in our world today?

There is much evidence of God at work in the world and yet, like the disciples, do we sometimes fail to grasp the significance of what we have witnessed? Is it the case that, because of all that is thrown at us to process in the present, we (humanity) have had our hearts hardened to the things of God and are no longer surprised by the contemporary parables we see around us? In a context where there is much knowledge and comment about infection and spread of disease, could we use that as a parable and look back to our Methodist roots where we remember that "in the providence of God, Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land"?

The second part of this section of the gospel emphasises Jesus' "contagious holiness" which was shared widely in the course of his mission. As the Bible Month material advocates:

"The lesson is clear. Holiness is not a thing to be protected but a relationship with the Holy One to be shared on his mission"

It is time to reveal the kingdom of God for what it is and to infect the hearts of the world with the holiness that God longs to share with the world.

Do join in on Zoom every Thursday evening during June at 7:30 p.m. to share our insights and thoughts. The Zoom link is given in the Notices section below, if you would like to join in via telephone, please contact me on 01256 895878 and I can guide you through the process.

Notices

Dates for the Diary

Week beginning	June 13 th	June 20 th	June 27 th	July 4 th
Sunday 4.00 pm <i>Reflection – a short 30-minute gathering using images, music and words led by Revd Rachel Borgars.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84235746908	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monday 7:30 pm <i>Discussion Group – originally called the ‘Hot Potatoes’ group, this is an opportunity to discuss current issues with some theology as part of the mix.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84961411119		✓		✓
Thursday 7:30pm <i>Circuit Bible Study – a more formal Bible study which usually meets monthly on the last Thursday in the month. During June we shall meet weekly following the Bible Month material.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88651459988	✓ Bible Month	✓ Bible Month	✓ Bible Month	
Friday 9:15 am <i>Prayer Group – an opportunity to pray together, bringing both joys and concerns in prayer.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82103846709	✓	✓	✓	✓

If you would like to join in with any of these gatherings via telephone, please do ring me on 01256 895878 and I will give you the details to dial in via any telephone. I do hope you will join us, even if you haven't felt Zoom is for you up until now!!



Thank you!

Your food donations are absolutely vital to the Foodbank's ability to give everyone referred to them a balanced and nutritious three-day supply of food.

They have a need for the following:

FOOD ITEMS: - Healthy Lunchbox Snacks, Fruit Squash, Pasta Sauce

NON-FOOD ITEMS: - Adult Toothpaste, Deodorant - Female And Male, Toilet Roll

You can find up-to-date details of what is needed here: <https://westberks.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>



On Monday 7th June, Climate Justice for All (CJ4A) released the third in their series of monthly short films and worship resources!

CJ4A is a campaign which invites Methodist communities all over the world to engage in the issue of the climate crisis and declare 'we believe in climate justice for all'. The campaign is being led by a team of young workers from Uruguay, Britain, Italy, Zambia and Fiji and a network of volunteers from fifteen other countries including Russia, India, Argentina, Zimbabwe and the USA.

The campaign is asking Methodist communities to do three things in the run up to COP26: listen, call and commit.

This month, the short film focuses on communities in Zambia and their experience of flooding and drought. June's worship resources come from Zambia and consist of things such as: short film discussion questions, prayers, song suggestions and an exco-reflection. CJ4A wants as many communities as possible to use their monthly content in whatever way best suits them: in Sunday worship, in small groups, in youth groups or in personal worship. These resources are an accessible way for Methodist communities to listen to our brothers and sisters in Zambia and hear their experience of the climate crisis.

To find out more about CJ4A, visit [their](#) website and make sure to check out their new short film and worship resources.