



SUNDAY 13 JUNE 2021

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

11th Sunday : Mark 4: 26-34

“Do you have any good stories?” I was in Ireland, and the man who asked the question kept me enthralled for hours as the Guinness got him going. Brendan was his name. He was a fund of great yarns. His stories were polished through repetition, reflections and punchlines honed to perfection. You might admire his style but never copy his delivery.

Good storytellers adapt as they go - exaggerating bits here, omitting bits there, adding colour and detail for effect, pausing to create drama. Gestures and grimaces beef up the tempo to prepare you for a memorable conclusion. It's a skill. Used to great effect, it's a powerful way to teach or to entertain.

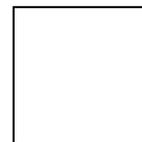
We talk in pictures. Abstract and academic stuff is important and necessary but we describe when we relate, fashioning for others scenarios witnessed or imagined. Clever storytelling picks us up and takes us on journeys to destinations often unexpected, success measured by our still being on board at the finale.

Jesus worked hard at his lesson plans. A teacher through and through, with a message of love and compassion of critical importance, the clarity of his stories crucial. We're still telling his stories. We're telling stories about him. They have power to pull us in and dare us into new possibilities and increasing change, enticing us from what's familiar into 'what if' territories of different thinking. Our brief to spread the message to others works if we've let it light up our lives first.

The Lord used the word 'kingdom' to describe the mindset required of his followers. His thinking is God's thinking, like a lens through which we need to see the world. He knows his audience. His examples square with their lives. He speaks of seeds that sprout in the dark, of mini specimens that are powerhouses of growth. His kingdom ferments within us and produces way beyond starting size. We have to create the conditions.

Jesus explained his teaching to his disciples. His stories were mere carrots to draw us further forward, to walk into and inhabit the pictures, knowing they have more to say.

The Teacher knows that good stories are remembered. Good students know these are invitations to engage with a vision of life seeking to draw us into itself. Enjoy the stories - but remember, they're dynamite!



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Pope Francis on the environment

In some countries, there are positive examples of environmental improvement. Rivers, polluted for decades, have been cleaned up, native woodlands have been restored, landscapes have been beautified thanks to environmental renewal projects, beautiful buildings have been erected, advances have been made in the production of non-polluting energy and in the improvement of public transportation. These achievements do not solve global problems, but they do show that men and women are still capable of intervening positively. For all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love.

At the same time we can note the rise of a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness. As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear. Superficially, apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, things do not look that serious, and the planet could continue as it is for some time. Such evasiveness serves as a licence to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption. This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices; trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen.

- *Laudato Si paras 58-59*