



SUNDAY 14 MARCH 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

4th Sunday of Lent (B): John 3: 14-21

The man and his wife were in tears. They were choked with emotion as they shared their story with me, a complete stranger. I can see them now, even though it was years ago and we had met by chance.

They'd been in a mess - a big one. So big they didn't have a starting clue as to how to get out of it. It wasn't one issue. The complexities seemed to breed on a weekly basis. Money problems, debts and poor mental health led to bad decisions and further troubles. Relationships were at an all time low. They were the architects of many of their problems. It didn't help that they could see how, in no small measure, their difficulties were self-inflicted. When you're in a fix like that, you can't get out on your own. They were keen to tell me what happened.

Through a friend who bore the scars of painful mistakes and loss, they were to meet someone who listened long and patiently to the point of understanding and practical help. He separated issues, proposed the simplest steps towards change. He showed what he could do for them and what only they could do for themselves. He believed in them, helped them to feel important and they began to believe in themselves. He didn't abandon them. His accompaniment freed them to find new resources, many within themselves.

Today's Gospel surfaced the memory of meeting this couple. One of the world's best quotations is read to us in this Sunday's Gospel. 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved'.

We've all been liberated from the cosmic mess we make of things. It's not possible to achieve this liberation ourselves. It's pure gift. There was no waving of a magic wand. Jesus' teaching and efforts required acceptance and change from stuck and stubborn people. They still do. Their rejection of him was another example of their selfish blindness. They crucified the Son of God who came to save them. How mad can we get? But he didn't cut us off. He sacrificed himself when we wouldn't make sacrifices. It cost not less than everything.

This is our God, drawing us into resurrected life. No one else would or could have done it. It should bring tears to the eyes if we absorb the message. He came so that we might have life in its fulness. Choose to live it to set others free. The story dares us.



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What do you believe?

SYCAMORE is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance in life today. It gives you space to meet other people on Zoom, share ideas, explore beliefs, and think about questions that really matter. Each session involves a short film and plenty of time for discussions. Everyone is welcome.

WHEN? Six Sundays from 21 February - 28 March 2021, 4 pm to 5.15 pm.

What? Welcome and introduction, short film, discussions, feedback

How to join? To get the Zoom link please mail hope@stcharlesrcc.co.uk

Hosted by St Charles RCIA team.

Pope Francis on caring for our world

A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production.

When social pressure affects their earnings, businesses clearly have to find ways to produce differently. This shows us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers. "Purchasing is always a moral and not simply economic act. Today, in a word, the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle".

- *Laudato Si para 206*