



SUNDAY 15 MARCH 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

3rd Sunday of Lent (A): John 4: 5-42

“So how did the two of you meet?” I asked. I was talking with a man who had lost his wife to a painful illness. More than 60 years previously a chance meeting through friends had grown into great love.

But was it chance? What may seem coincidence to some, looks to others with some hindsight that it was intended, an act of Providence. Yes, opportunities are taken for conversations. But what develops and unfolds can look like movements of grace.

Our Gospel story today develops from a thirsty Jesus sitting by a well in the heat of the day hoping for someone to arrive with a bucket. And he’s in Samaritan territory. The natives are not friendly.

The woman who turns up to draw water is surprised to be asked for a drink by a Jewish man. The conversation ensues. Jesus gives her time and respect. Unusually she’s coming to draw and carry water in the midday heat; others would have been at a much cooler hour. Who was she avoiding and why?

Jesus is not the only one who is thirsty. This woman has other thirsts. A series of broken relationships suggest a longing for a love that lasts. The Lord accepts she has skeletons in the cupboard - it’s a rare family that hasn’t - but he’s offering something that can quench her thirst. In his patient acceptance of her, something that may be a rarity in her community, she learns that he is the Chosen One of God.

As his disciples join him, the woman leaves her water jar at the well and goes back to the village. She’s now carrying something different. She’s the bearer of breaking news about the Messiah. Her message brings others to the well to check things out. Their curiosity leads to his staying with them for two days.

News travels. Bad or good. The villagers move from believing the testimony of the woman to knowing first hand for themselves. We must do the same. Like these people, others have told us about Jesus. It’s a start. But we need to get to know for ourselves - by talking to him, spending time with him like they did. It’s personal. Then you become a carrier of the message. You can speak personally about the one who gave you the water of life in baptism and how it continues within you.

Jesus was patient with the woman and he is patient with you and me. We need it. Others need us to be patient with them. St Paul’s famous love quote begins ‘Love is always patient and kind’. (Corinthians 13:4). God loves us while we’re sinners. Faith takes time. It fluctuates. Take the opportunity to stay with him and discover what he has for you this Lent. And be patient.



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Lenten Day of Prayer - Tuesday 31 March, from 10.30am until 7pm. St Mary’s Church, Bishop Auckland will be open all day for prayer and quiet reflection. There will be different prayer stations to help you reflect on the time of Lent and the God Who Speaks. Refreshments will be served in the meeting room throughout the day.

Scripture Roadshow, Ushaw 9 and 10 May - make a date in the diary. In this year of The God Who Speaks, the events of these two days will be a great help. You may wish to get a group together.

More from Pope Francis - the Joy of the Gospel

I prefer a Church that is hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us “Give them something to eat”. (Mk 6:37) (Para 49)

The Green Project - is a great way of engaging young people with the issue of climate change and for inspiring and encouraging people to take action. The project by the Springs Dance Company on 17 March includes a moving and thought provoking 10 minute duet performance with introduction. It will be followed by Q&A and a discussion. Workshops for youngsters are also available at Bishop Auckland Methodist Church, 21 Cockton Hill Road, DL14 6EN. Workshops : 4pm for Primary age and 4.45pm for Secondary age. 7 - 9pm adult event includes performance and discussion. For primary and secondary age workshops book your place by calling 01388 603142 or email john.purdy@methodist.org.UK