

Connected Sermon – Mark 1. 16-18, Joshua 1. 1-9

Good morning, it's amazing to think that if you're watching this how we are connected. That with the development of technology how this is possible, and after this we can see each other live via Coffee, even when we're so physically distant. It's good to connect

I realise, that some people like to see themselves as islands, but it is true as poet John Donne said, that no one is an island. But, this island mentality is proving disastrous in our culture. There is an epidemic of loneliness. Lots of studies have been done, one in 2018, reported that about a quarter of people in Britain say they always or often feel lonely or isolated. This loneliness stunts our lives and actually kills us. Half of Britons over 65 consider the TV or a pet as their main source of company. Various surveys show that loneliness is the number one fear of young people today. As a symbol...One young man said this....

"I spent two hours wandering around an IKEA, because I was too nervous to ask people to come with me. I ate two hotdogs and left with nothing" – alone and disconnected

Opening Prayer – Thank you for the good plans you have for us and your world, thank you for the gift of connection.

Connected to God

For Christians, humanity begins in a garden where there was harmony, communion between people, God and creation and it was very good.....we were created by a loving personal God to be connected to God and others in good healthy loving relationships.

At the heart of the Fall, the problems of this world, is the fundamental breakdown of relationships. We have become disconnected. But God in his great love sent his own Son Jesus, a human being, a person to put things right. Jesus came as an Extraordinary gift of love to restore the broken relationships and heal the great divide and void inside. He came to save us from our isolation, confusion, our sin, our selfishness, our greed and shame and make us right with God. As Mark's gospel starts, Jesus came to this earth calling people to leave behind, to turn away, from their old lives of sin and follow Me.....To put their faith and Trust in Jesus the giver of eternal life.

At St Swithin's we want to help people connect with our glorious creator God, and offer people a restoration of relationship to the love of the Father, through the gift of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit. It's a beautiful invitation to connect and join in the life of God's dance.

I don't know how you picture God, but a week or so ago, we were on our family walk on a beautiful spring Day near the racecourse, when I looked up and saw in front of me, 3 cabbage white butterflies in this wonderful, prolonged dance, fluttering, constantly moving, in a beautiful dance above my head. God invites us to join in the life of the Dance of the F, S and HS

Connected to Others

One of the great joys of any life is finding friends. It's not about being extrovert or introvert but discovering the joy of connecting with others who bring us life. And on a simple level friendships begin when choose to speak to people, to offer a cheerful word of greeting, when we simply smile or learn someone else's name. Connecting can be that simple. It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, only fourteen to smile.

Lots of studies have been done of successful sports teams that suggest that successful teams communicate affirmation to each other through touch more often than unsuccessful teams. Successful teams have players who are constantly connected putting their arms around teammates who are feeling down or just messed up. In cricket its why batsmen are constantly touch gloves between balls. Successful teams have learnt the importance of being connected to their teammates.

In John 15 Jesus calls his followers friends and to remain permanently connected to the Vine. His followers are to be distinguished by their love for one another. This level of love is costlier, but its what you do for your family, walk with them thro' thick and thin, it includes sacrifice and selflessness.

"In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, Jesus brought us reconciliation of our relationships and The Bible offers us tangible hope that these relationships are possible – that humility, gentleness, patience, honesty, peace, forgiveness, compassion, and love can be found. Isn't it wonderful that God's grace can make this possible even for sinners in a fallen world!" It's these stories that I'm consistently seeing and hearing about in this lockdown – See how they love one another

Connected to our culture

When I read the biblical story, I'm not left with an overwhelming impression that Christians should retreat from the world, but that they should take hold of the purposes and mission of the pioneer and perfecter of our faith Jesus Christ who loved the world and gave himself for it.

The story of Joshua is incredibly challenging and inspiring of how God calls people for particular tasks at particular times to fulfil God's purposes. Joshua was called, confident of God's presence and favour on his life, he was devoted to God and his word, committed to his task that enabled him to be strong and courageous and so fulfil God's purposes. How can this give us heart? Because the God of Joshua is the same God who is with us today, We too can engage with the world with confidence and courage. As God's ambassadors at School, in University, as nurses, teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, as social reformers, administrators, engineers – even as journalists and politicians. Why? Because when God is present with us everything becomes possible.

All of us can reach out to others in love, care, friendship and compassion. The world needs us to connect, to shine brightly where they are, not to isolate and hide.

Conclusion

A Welcoming Church is a Relational Church, where we want to connect with God and others, and we want other people to connect with us, because we are good news. How can you connect with God this week? Who can you bless with a card, a phonecall or a text?

Let's Pray

Thank You father, that you came to us in Jesus even when we were far away
Help us to grow in our relationship with You and learn to bless others. AMEN