

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon : 7th Sunday after Trinity ~ July 31, 2017

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So what are you going to be doing this summer? That's probably the most asked question at the moment. August beckons – what are you going to do? For many, August is a time of, if not exactly shut down, certainly a major reduction in work for many – and the Church is no exception. We have fewer meetings and most of our groups close. For many it is the holiday month for families, which can often include the wider family members. Even those without family responsibilities can find there is a different pace to August. So what are you going to do in August?

Well, I would like to suggest this morning that everyone should take some time, make some time, to slow down, to ease off the accelerator, just to 'be' rather than to 'do' during the coming month. In fact, maybe even to try to have something of a mini sabbatical, to do something different this month. It might be to have a break and go away. It might be to have the occasional day out. It might be to read a good book. It might be to stay at home and enjoy the garden – or whatever. But the challenge is for us all to slow the pace during August if we possibly can. Some of you will, of course, be at work – but there could still be more free time because so much else closes down during August.

What do I do in August? Well, I do try to take time out to reflect, to pray more about my work and ministry as it is unfolding at Christ Church and in West Wimbledon. I shall go away for a few days holiday. I will try and catch up a bit with family and friends – and, on the wet days, I love to sort through the filing cabinet, the bookshelves and take a trip or two to the dump. There is nothing more satisfying than having a clear out ready for September!

Whatever it is that we decide to do, regard August as a precious gift. Today's readings reflect on gifts that are given.

In the letter of Paul to the Romans, we are promised that God will work for the good of those who love him, reminding us that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Just to think about the reality of that truth could be a good place to start this month.

Finally, to Matthew, for the last part of the Gospel theme we have been following over the past three weeks. We've reflected upon the parable of the sower and upon the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Then this week, we hear some

more parables and sayings all lumped together, helping us to think about what the kingdom of heaven is.

So Jesus urges us to reflect on the way in which the kingdom of heaven is like a tiny mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, which can grow into the largest of all plants; of a tiny amount of yeast that is the most crucial part of the ingredients for making dough; of the way in which the kingdom of heaven is like hidden treasure, is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. The final image is of a net let down into the lake which caught all kinds of fish – and probably lots of other rubbish as well– all of which need to be carefully sorted by the fishermen – as Jesus underlined the angels will have to do at the end of the age.

What do all these images have in common? Well, in referring to them, Jesus is asking us to think and pray about what are the important priorities in our lives.

We know that we are called to be faithful and true sowers of God's word by all we say and do and are. We know that we are all called to be stewards of God's world, honest and good stewards who can be trusted. But sometimes we have to sit down and look honestly at our lives – and begin to throw out those things which prevent us from getting close to God, to have a good sort out, as it were.

So, it follows that, as part of what we might try to do in August, we might also include the possibility of reading a bit more of the Bible. We might want to pray a bit more. We might want to be still in the presence of the Lord. We might want to remember that we are called to be people of wisdom and integrity, that we are called to be loyal disciples, faithful sowers, people of prayer. All of this is what makes us different from someone who is just a good neighbour. It is our Christian faith, our love for Jesus of Nazareth, however we might show that. So it is right that we might try to make time to try to grow closer to God by our prayers, as much by our actions and our words.

Each year we are given the gift of a month when most of us should be able to find some time just to be. To be in the presence of God and to ask him to help us get our priorities right – so that, at the start of September, we have, almost without realising it, become more closely the people that God wants us to be.

All my hope on God is founded;  
He doth still my trust renew.  
Me through change and chance He guideth,  
Only good and only true.  
God unknown, He alone  
Calls my heart to be His own.