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Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : June 30th, 2019
“Second Sunday after Trinity”

SERMON TRINITY 2 CCWW

During my recent UK holiday there were some wet days - the perfect opportunity to read a new book which the Book Club are all reading. I devoured it – and would seriously recommend you might want to read it. Called THE SALT PATH by Raynor Winn, it is a true story. Just days after Raynor learns that Moth, her husband of 32 years, is terminally ill, their home is taken away and they lose their livelihood. With nothing left and little time, they make the brave and impulsive decision to walk the 630 miles of the sea-swept South West Coast Path, from Somerset to Dorset, via Devon and Cornwall.

Carrying only the essentials for survival on their backs, they live wild in the ancient, weathered landscape of cliffs, sea and sky. Yet through every step, every encounter and every test along the way, their walk becomes a remarkable journey. They're not religious but I would suggest it is a very spiritual book, an honest and life-affirming true story of coming to terms with grief and the healing power of the natural world. At its heart it is a portrayal of home, and how it can be lost, rebuilt and rediscovered in the most unexpected ways.

It's been shortlisted for a number of prizes and reviewers love it: 'A beautiful, thoughtful, lyrical story of homelessness, human strength and endurance'; 'Mesmerising; 'A thoughtful, lyrical story of homelessness, strength and endurance';

I think I took to the book because I am always deeply moved by people who show real commitment in what they do – whether it be Andy Murray, St Peter, Her Majesty the Queen or the England Women's Football Team. A random group of people I've picked but all, in my view, people who show real and total commitment to what they

do – who show true endurance as did Raynor and Moth Winn. Whether or not they succeed, they don't lack dedication and commitment to what they do.

Of course, we are all very well aware that many today do not seem to show any real commitment in their lives – they flit like butterflies from one thing to the next, they have little or no staying power, no endurance – and it is something which affects all age groups. So when I meet or hear of people who are totally dedicated and committed to what they do, I sit up and take notice – as I did when I read the Salt Path.

And I sit up and take notice because that is something which should characterise all who are called to follow Jesus of Nazareth. For we know that when we are called to follow Jesus, that means a total and lasting and enduring commitment.

In the reading from Luke, people are being inspired to follow Jesus but not everyone is prepared to do this with total commitment. Others enthusiastically offer to come with him, and Jesus has to dampen their enthusiasm by bringing them down to earth and making them count the cost of the commitment before they decide. The practical living arrangements, for instance, and probable lack of home comforts, need to be looked at squarely in the face before the choice is made.

It is not everyone's calling to wander with Jesus around the countryside, preaching and healing the sick. Equally valid is the ministry of those chatting the good news of the gospel among their own people in their own towns and villages. What binds all these people together, though, is their commitment to the task in hand.

In the baptismal and confirmation promises, God continues to place people on the spot. What commitment to Christ means is clearly stated so there may be no misunderstanding, and the candidates themselves are free to choose whether to commit themselves or not. But, having made the choice, there is no getting away from the fact that they are committed to living differently. Additionally many men and women are this weekend making a life commitment to the church through ordination.

Paul explains in Galatians that it is for our freedom that Christ has set us free, and to settle back into our former pattern of life will only enslave us. Living as committed Christians we need constantly to check that we are still walking in step with the Spirit. In the Bible we are given a whole list of examples against which we can check our behaviour so that we can make adjustments to our direction accordingly. It's about getting the balance right in our lives – the balance between demands of work, leisure, family and friends – and intertwined within all that – not separate from it – is our commitment to God through Jesus Christ.

You see the Women players cannot just play half a match on Tuesday evening. Andy Murray cannot hit the ball a few times and then sit down for a coffee. St Peter couldn't just relinquish his leadership of the infant Christian Church when the going got tough. Raynor and Moth Winn couldn't turn back once they had started. Commitment. Endurance.

As Christians we are called to that same kind of commitment and endurance. We can't half do it. When we commit ourselves to following Christ, it's going to affect the way we talk, the way we behave with our friends and our enemies, the way we spend our time and our money. It's going to affect all our thinking and the choices we make. So it is a bit like deciding to do a triple somersault or a double pirouette – it takes a lot of dedication and courage to launch off.

In our Christian life. God gives us his Holy Spirit as our strength. It enables us to do, as someone has imaginatively suggested, those triple somersaults of caring love for those we don't much like, and the double pirouettes of co-operating when all we want is our own way. Real loving is very hard work and it takes lots of dedication. But with God's strength we can do it, and then we will be moving freely through life, in the way that God has called us to and knows will make us and others truly happy.

It is such a dark world at times – people are so full of anger and bitterness at times – that the world needs more than ever the Christian message of love and care and forgiveness – a message that we are called upon to show as much by what we do and are as by what we say – and when we can do that, then truly thanks be to God.