

St Marc Grenoble

Sunday 17th July 2022

Genesis 18: 1 - 10 (Msg)

Luke 10: 38 - 42 (Msg)

**'Only One Thing'**

Good Morning to Everyone, both here and on Zoom. Special Congratulations to those of you who've made it to Church in this heat - Well Done!

**PRAY**

Two questions: - First, has anyone been following the 'short readings' I've been putting on What'sApp?? Have you found them helpful??

Second, What did you make of today's fascinating readings?? (I see I last explored them, with my congregation in Wales, exactly 12 years ago.) ...

Thanks. We could spend half a day looking at just one of the readings, which would be unfair in this heat; but they are both packed full of really interesting things to explore. Did you spot any theme running through the readings?

The story about Abraham and the three visitors has always absolutely fascinated me; what do you make of it??

It's a really unexpected and unheralded appearance, and recognition, of God in Abraham's home and his life - why?

God appeared to Abraham as 'Three Men' I've often wondered how Abraham recognised them? Was it Father, Son and Holy Spirit in human form?

He offered lavish and fastidious hospitality, which was normal and culturally obligatory and it was readily accepted. Then, God the Father (The one of the three who was actually identified) declared that Sarah (who was around 90) was going to have a child in the next year – which was totally unexpected!

Sarah, it seems, genuinely couldn't believe it – not at all unreasonable in my book! She was way past child bearing age. Note Sarah didn't actually appear from the kitchen tent. Men and women who were not part of the same family, didn't mix in polite society. But, she did laugh! And, despite her incredulity, after years of barrenness, Isaac was indeed born the following year!

The point is carefully and clearly made that God can, and continues to do, well over 3,000 years later, things beyond our expectations or imagination; we must never try to limit Him by our own simple beliefs and capabilities.

This overturning of culture continues into the Gospel reading. Not an unexpected appearance, more about Jesus challenging established norms.

When we hear the story, about Mary and Martha, we usually assume that Martha was fed up with Mary, her sister, because she wasn't helping to prepare the meal – but that may, or may not, have been true.

But, there is a much wider issue here. In our culture, we have no understanding of the huge departure from the norm, Jesus was encouraging.

The phrase Mary was 'sitting at Jesus feet' has a much deeper meaning than we may readily understand. The suggestion is that Mary was studying under Jesus' tutelage, or teaching, like an intern; so the logical conclusion was that she would eventually want to become a rabbi; which, in the Jewish society of the day, was impossible.

In effect, Jesus was saying to both Martha and Mary – 'I'm pleased that Mary wishes to train to be a leader or teacher, rather than just continuing as a servant'. Furthermore, Jesus was affirming her as having chosen 'the better way'. Again, shattering every culturally acceptable norm of the era.

So what does this story have to say to us?

Jesus wasn't really criticising Martha, but He was explaining that there is far more to faith than simply serving. It isn't always necessary to be constantly rushing around providing food and hospitality, as she had been doing.

Jesus cares about the whole person, not only in acts of service; the deeds we do, the money we give, the charities we support, the petitions we sign.

Jesus is also deeply interested in our hearts and minds, and the way we respond to His teaching and open ourselves and our lives to Him.

So, the thought for this week – as you're trying to keep cool, going about your work or household chores, is How do I make time to 'sit at Jesus feet'?

How can we learn more from Him; about how He wants us to worship Him? How do we open our hearts to Him and learn to share our faith in Jesus and His love for us, with those around us?

So, now as I close, let's Pray

- there's a beautiful ancient prayer from the Ordinal, which the Bishop prayed at my ordination, and which I've always felt that we, as the 'Priesthood of all believers' should pray far more often:

COME, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire.

Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
Who dost thy seven-fold gifts impart.

Thy blessed Unction from above  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.

Enable with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
With the abundance of thy grace.

Keep far our foes, give peace at home:  
Where thou art guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
And thee, of both, to be but One.

That, through the ages all along,  
This may be our endless song:

Praise to thy eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**