

Mothering Sunday 2015 – St Mary's: Lent wk4 'COMMUNITY'

Talk part 1 - ALISE

I wonder if there are ever arguments in your house? What do children fight over.....screen times, trampoline, who gets the biggest slice of cake. What about amongst couples – what do they argue about? Biggest reason for fall outs is finance. So even in loving communities people disagree. Why is that? We want to get our own way, we want to be at the top of the pile, we think we know best – we are selfish.....

People are fascinated with comparing themselves and others, so we end up with debates about the greatest Englishman ever, or the greatest footballer, or the greatest author, or composer, or painter. The Times newspaper even runs an annual Preacher of the Year competition. All this reflects an ancient attitude. The Lord's apostles, out of earshot of Jesus (so they thought), had been arguing about who was the greatest amongst them. Even on such a special day as this there is rivalry if you look at all the products in the shops, no. 1 mum, best mum merchandise: (no. 1 mum prop/best mum – well I am clearly number 1 mum what positions are the rest of you?)

Are we permitted even to think let alone speak in terms of one Christian being 'greater' than another? Are not all Christians equally made in God's image, and equally sinners in need of salvation, and equally granted marvellous redemptive privileges? Of course that is true; we are all one in Christ Jesus. Every Christian is in God's eternal Hall of Fame. But it is in gifts and in maturity that we differ from one another.

It is often said that if you find the perfect church – don't join it, because you will ruin it! This morning we are a building full of broken people. None of us are perfect, we are all works in progress, not the finished article. We see this in our Bible passage today don't we, even way back, Jesus's closest followers argued about who was the greatest, they felt the need to compare themselves. They probably hoped that Jesus would chose the one who had listened hardest or the one who had taken onboard his teaching most fully – INSTEAD Jesus told them that the way to be great was to be the greatest servant. How does that work? (Come back to that!)

Then Jesus even takes it a step further. He took an anonymous child (who had little value in society at that time) and said that whoever welcomes a child welcomed him. What is he saying?

Talk part 2 – MATT

Picking up on theme of being a servant (from 1st reading).

SLIDE – What think of when hear word 'servant'? (ASK)

Who watches this? – **SLIDE** (DOWNTON) Full of servants, some of them nice, and some of them like this... **SLIDE** (MR BARROW) – a servant who serves himself.

Role of parent (esp mothers) involves a lot of service. We give up a lot to serve our children – food, shelter, social life. Put our kids first. Real service. Think of one way your mum served you (NEIGHBOUR – SLIDE).

Same idea in church – serve one another. Easy to say, but often like Mr Barrow – SLIDE – serving ourselves, our needs, our interests. Problem with words we use – what do we call this? ‘Service’ but actually it’s wrong idea. Here to worship God, to encourage each other, to be strengthened in faith, to pray. Only a few of us are serving in sense that bible means it – yet we call this service. Why lots of churches call this a ‘meeting’ instead, so we don’t get wrong idea.

But back to original thought – how do we avoid just looking after ourselves and our interests?

Paul says: READ v1 – in other words, IF you understand anything about following Jesus at all! Then pretend serving isn’t an option. We put others first, or as Paul says it: READ v3b-4. (SLIDE)

Tough call – but there’s a reason, Paul says. We do this because this is what Jesus did and we need to be like him: READ v5 – Jesus left the glory of heaven and served us – so we should serve one another.

Not same as low self-esteem. We know who we are and how much God loves us – deliberate choice, we choose humility.

Still hard – think of some areas where it’s hard in church: NEIGHBOUR – FEEDBACK

What about family – where is it hard there? NEIGHBOUR - FEEDBACK

Need God’s help. Also need to remember that it’s worth it. A community where people serve each other is a wonderful place to be. STORY OF LONG SPOONS – SLIDES.

So let’s ask for God’s help – PRAY: READ v1-2 first.