**JESUS RECOGNISED IN DAILY LIFE**

I look in my desk drawer for my stapler.

I just know it won’t be there; and of course it’s not.

Actually it wouldn’t matter whether or not it was there; the mere fact that I don’t expect to find the stapler usually means that I don’t.

The same is true of finding the presence of God in my life.

If I cruise along with no expectation of God popping up on my path, I probably won’t find Him there, even if my faith tells me God is always there.

I worry that this might mean that I am spiritually dead.

But then I am comforted by the stories of the noble figures of the Bible for whom God appeared equally unexpectedly.

Let me mention but two such occasions:

Think of that great patriarch of the Hebrews, Jacob.

There he was trekking towards Haran when he stopped for the night - going to sleep under the stars with a stone for a pillow - as you do!

During the night he had an extraordinary dream in which God appeared and promised that the land through which he was travelling would come into the possession of him and his descendants.

On waking, and not until he woke, Jacob, alerted by his dream to the presence of God, exclaimed, ***“surely the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it! … How awesome is this place”***, (Gen. 28:17).

“This place” the evening before had seemed like a common or garden wilderness - even, one might say, a God-forsaken wilderness.

But in the morning it had become for Jacob a place made “awesome” by the now perceived presence of God.

My second example of finding only the God you expect to find is found in today’s reading from Luke’s gospel:

Clopas and his friend were walking down the road on the evening of Easter Day, talking about the events of the last three days.

And Jesus came alongside.

Luke tells us that ***“their eyes were kept from recognizing him”,*** (Lk. 24:16).

I wonder what that means?

My first thought was that St Luke was inferring that God had supernaturally and deliberately prevented Clopas and his friend from recognizing Jesus.

But it maybe they were prevented by nothing more than their own lack of expectation.

They’d heard the preposterous reports of the grave being empty, but hadn’t taken on board that that might really mean that Jesus was risen from the dead.

It wasn’t until Jesus, the guest at dinner, assumed hostly authority and ***“took the bread, blessed and broke it”,*** (Lk. 24:30) that ***“their eyes were opened and they recognized him”.***

Jacob, and then Clopas and his friend are but two in a long string of biblical examples of people who did not recognize God in the midst of an event, but only in hindsight.

Whether it’s the apparent disappearance of my stapler or the expected absence of Jesus, I too often fail to see what is plainly present.

It occurs to me that I may not be the only person who fails to experience Jesus in my daily life.

If it’s like that for you too, then perhaps these three suggestions might help you to connect with our risen Lord more often:

First, I encourage you to develop a habit of asking the question, ‘where is God in this situation?’

If you can, do it on the hoof - in the midst of the situation - then so much the better.

If you can’t do that, then perhaps you could develop the habit of Jacob and Clopas and recognise God’s action in retrospect.

As you pray day by day, try casting your mind back on the significant events and conversations of the day just gone and ask God, ‘where were you in that event, dear God?’

The second suggestion flows naturally from the first: as you observe God amidst the events of life, make some response.

Sometimes the response will be thankfulness - as it naturally is when we see God in the kindness of people or the beauty of our locked-down garden.

Other times the response might be puzzlement, or regret, or even anger.

The third suggestion is a call to be a prophet in your community.

You’ve seen God in action.

Pass it on; others may not have noticed.

I’m not talking about being insufferably pious; but it may well be sufficient, when a neighbour comments on your lovely roses, to suppress the response, ‘yea, they’re not bad this year’, and simply say instead, ‘yes, aren’t they lovely; praise God’.

And don’t think that you are doing this for the purpose of filling the pews - even if that would be nice in due course!

Nor are you doing it, as it were, for God.

St Peter reminds us of the purpose of our evangelism: ***“(Jesus) was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.” (1 Peter 1:20)***

God’s action in the world is for the sake of the world.

It’s Good News.

If it goes unnoticed it is in danger of being wasted.

We try to grow our habit of noticing God around us because it’s Good News for us.

We pass on the Good News because it is a gift for those who might not have themselves noticed God in the midst of life.

So, in summary, be serious about growing the habit of noticing the presence and action of God in your daily life; of thanking God for God’s presence; and then sharing the wonder of this presence with those around you.

Let’s finish by using the verse and response we often us at the start of the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving when we celebrate Communion together - you can remember back that far?!

Verse: The Lord is here

Response: **God’s Spirit is with us**

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