

Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Text: Luke 4:1-13 & Romans 10:8b-13

The desert is a beautiful but hostile place, I am told. I have never had the opportunity to visit a desert. I think I would like to visit a desert one day

I think...

In the Christian tradition it's a place where people go not to retreat or to escape from life, but to engage with it more fully

I don't mean, of course, the actual waiting at bus stops, changing nappies, negotiating buy-in to an idea at work

But rather the stuff that goes on inside us as we wait at bus stops, change nappies and negotiate buy in from others

Our motivations, prejudices, and fears

The way we see others, the way we see ourselves and what then spills out in how we live on the outside

It's also to do with the way we see Jesus and what He may or may not have to do with not just the inner, the spiritual, the private, the personal Sunday stuff but also the outer, physical, public, Monday to Saturday stuff

Our two readings have a common strand running through them and it's the idea of "all"

Writing to Christians in Rome about how to live their 24/7 lives following in the Way of Jesus, Paul speaks about issues of religious and ethnic diversity and how that Way of Jesus makes a difference to both the inner and outer life

The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on Him (Rom 10:12b)

He is generous "to all" – all people, Jew and Gentile

But also Lord "of all" – all things, the whole of life

This is the implicit "all" we see in the temptations of Jesus, temptations that encompass the whole of life, inner and outer

In his baptism at the Jordan Jesus has been affirmed in his identity and purpose as Son of His heavenly Father – the "all" of that calling is now tested as the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness

After 40 days without food in the desert He is famished: and the Devil then plays on this to tempt Him to use His powers for personal satisfaction

This is the "all" of the physical, the sensual, what we trust to sustain us, be it food or pension plan

Next the temptation is about significance, status, authority, the ability to shape things as we want them as he is tempted with all the kingdoms of the world – note again the "all" – all yours, Jesus, if you will shift allegiance ...

The last temptation is interesting: not about safety but sidestepping the way of the cross – adulation and celebrity status from an amazed audience as he would float to earth in place of their eventual

rejection and suffering – this 3rd temptation is about our purpose and the way we do life, our way or God's

Together they make up all dimensions of life: the physical, the relational, the vocational

In our marking of Lent this year I am inviting us to consider what it means to be a disciple of Jesus

That's what He called those who:

- went beyond interest in Him and attraction to his teaching to a deliberate decision to follow Him
- to learn His ways on both the inside and outside of life,
- recognise His authority as Lord over the private and the public, Sunday and Monday to Saturday
- and learn what that means in both belief and daily practice

In baptism at the Jordan Jesus said Yes to His God-given identity and purpose, and began a journey of living out its practical implications

So, in our baptism, the starting point of being a disciple we hear about our God-given identity and purpose

And in daily Yeses we work out what it then means in daily life

The thing is, though, that we are very good, as human beings, at negotiating limits and boundaries

It may be a remnant of what is sometimes called Original Sin – what one person has described as like getting “that” shopping trolley at the supermarket: the one where one of the wheels has a mind of its own and consistently drags us away from the direction we want to go in

We are good at saying Yes to Jesus - really meaning it, but then gradually finding good reasons to draw some boundaries when He, as Lord, lays claim to more and more of our lives

We are pleased to invite Him in to the guest room of our lives – glad He is there, available for a chat on Sunday, to be called on in times of distress or perplexity

But then He's there at breakfast asking, “What are we doing today”: suddenly at our side in a meeting, as we fill in our tax return, respond to that person who yet again has rubbed us up the wrong way...

This is the “all” of discipleship, of calling Jesus “Lord”

“Lord” is a term we often only associate with constraint of our freedom rather than understanding that to call Him Lord is to yield our lives to the One who is the true source and enabler of our freedom, the One who generously gives us our true identity and purpose

This is the real meaning of the “all” that Paul is pointing to in Romans 10

READ Rom 10:11-13

– those who call on the Lord's name and find themselves saved, who call Him Lord and find out more and more about His amazing generosity

This is the “all” that integrates into a whole not only all people but all things: the inner and the outer, Monday to Sunday, private and public under the Lordship of Jesus

And as His disciples, He is committed to showing us how to do the same in our own lives – integrate the whole of life – inner and outer, private and public, 24/7 - and bring it under His generous Lordship

The Church of England's initiative Setting God's people free describes it like this

A dp is someone learning the way of Jesus in their context at this moment, learning to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that show the difference the Gospel makes

That's what we are exploring this Lent – learning to follow Jesus confidently, in all of life, and discovering the difference His Good News, His generosity makes to us and others

If you'd like to do that intentionally, do that with others we have two possibilities to help

This evening and then for a week Steve McCarthy and the ESRCC are offering guided prayer in the midst of daily life

Or join Marie-Louise and me once a week during Lent to eat a simple meal, talk about how to do this in practice, have a go and then come back each week to share what we have learned and encourage each other to have a go again in the coming week