

## Sermon 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Last year when this reading came around, I focused on the woman who contradicts Jesus and the fact that he listens to her and changes his mind because of her words!!

So this year I'm focussing to the 2<sup>nd</sup> section where there is a tiny little comment – 'he sighs' – lectio divina explanation

Bubbled up – perhaps because I myself am doing a lot of sighing at the moment!

How many times a day I wonder do *you sigh* at the thought of the frustrations and complications of life?

I have sighed many times this week as I have considered all the implications and potential pitfalls of returning to worship indoors. Even I crave a straight up miracle occasionally!

Travelling to London to join the cries for action on the climate emergency, I craved a miracle.

Watching footage from Afghanistan, I craved a miracle.

Watching the floods and fires and hurricanes that are ongoing - I crave a miracle.

How do we read and receive these gospel accounts of deliverance when we see all around us the need for transformation?

Jesus encounters a man...he sighs. (In some translations, he "murmurs" or "groans.") Before he performs a miracle, before he heals this man who needs his help, the Son of God looks up to heaven and *sighs*.

And that sigh resonates – surely you too like me have muttered exhausted sighs, bewildered sighs, impatient angry frustrated sighs perhaps especially over the past 2 years. .

*Jesus looks up to heaven and sighs – I wonder why Jesus sighs?*

**I wonder if Jesus sighs** because he's misunderstood?

Maybe Jesus sighs because he knows that the coming of the kingdom of God is a slow, subtle, arduous, messy, and a profoundly costly business. That it doesn't come with the waving of wands and the snapping of fingers. It comes by the power of God, yes, but it comes only when we take up our crosses and *join God* in building the kin dom.

And yet "the crowds" **that's us**, so often insist on seeing Jesus as nothing more than a peddler of quick fixes. *We want* him to be a magician to sort things out for us, but he is not a performer in need of spectators, he's not a peddler of quick fixes and he has just been seen reprimanded by a woman.

Pause

**I wonder if Jesus sighs because** “cures” are not the point of his ministry, **No ...‘Wholeness’ is the point.**

Restoring the lonely, the isolated, and the ostracized to healthy community is the point.

Human flourishing in all of its rich and varied aspects is the point.

Pause

**I wonder if Jesus sighs because he grieves the distortion of the good news?**

Notice that as soon as Jesus heals the deaf man, he asks the crowd — no *orders* the crowd — to keep the miracle to themselves.

When Jesus restores the man’s speech and hearing, he does so by inviting the man to “be opened.” Not simply cured or healed. *Opened*. What does it mean to be opened? Does it mean to surrender? To be surprised? To let go? To become vulnerable? To make room? To give birth? To become hospitable? To live fully?

You see the healing work of Jesus is always more layered than it looks. Its roots run deep, and its implications run wide.

**I wonder if Jesus sighs because he knows how little the crowds understand?**

What to the onlookers - you and me -understand about the true *opening* he longs for for us?

**I wonder if Jesus sighs because he’s painfully aware of how his healing stories will be peddled and packaged ?**

If nothing else, I am grateful to know that Jesus’s prayers included sighs. Sighs borne of longing, love, sorrow, and hope, all mingled together. Because if there’s anything the world needs right now, its our sighs followed by our hope. A Gospel hope.

Fierce, creative, tenacious, and daring is precisely the kind of hope Jesus offers and gives to the deaf man

If we are to live out that hope it must be grounded in our engagement with the truth of who God is and what the kingdom of God actually looks like.

will we invite the world to be opened?

Opened to the possibility of change

Opened to seeing the truth

Opened to the cries of the syro phonecian women of today who are the most marginalised and vulnerable?

**I wonder if Jesus' sighs** can be heard across 2000 years?

....where we stand today.

I hope so so much

What would it look like for us to become *better* agents of human flourishing?

What would it look like to recognize that in God's eyes, *all of us* are in need.....

of healing, wholeness, deliverance, and transformation?

That no one — *absolutely* no one — should seek the kingdom of God and expect to walk away unchanged?

This week, may our prayers and sighs join with those of Jesus Christ in whose footsteps we tread and may we petition for the life of this world in this age, trusting always in the one who says, "Be opened."