

Dear friends,

As I sat down to write my letter this month, I have to say I had no idea what I could share about - my mind was a-blank!

While I know that to enter into the task, is like a journey - you have to begin even if it is to change direction eventually - I still get that block that stops me until I simply just have to stop evading and get to it and make a start (and in this case, before the editor begins politely chasing me for her copy ☺ )

And actually, that's an important point to make - that what we do - or don't do - can also impact the outcome for others in a good way - or not...

I can easily forget that as I begin my day I have asked God to show me the way and to direct my thoughts and actions in the best possible way for the day ahead and its tasks. Sometimes it seems as though I am asking God to show me the way - but only if it is the direction I want to be heading in - and carry on doing my own thing regardless until I realise that 'doing my own thing' can bring complications and difficulties. When that happens, and things are beginning to go a bit pear-shaped, I know I have to stop and begin again, taking time to pause and listen and to be open to what is going on around me and how best to stay connected to the flow of life and to be aware to the needs of others...

There are characters in the Bible called prophets - they are called to be 'messengers' for God, to pray and listen and impart God's word to those communities God has assigned them to serve in that place and at that time.

One such character in the Bible was called Jonah. You can read about him in the Old Testament - it is a short story, just four chapters, but well worth a read and a good story for today...

Jonah was a prophet who lived about five miles south of Nazareth at a village called Gath-hepher in Lower Galilee. Jonah was unlike the other prophets who were called to prophecy for Israel or Judah - he was called to go and prophecy to the people of Nineveh, the capital of the old Assyria empire, who had invaded Israel and sent many of his people away to exile, and so being a messenger for 'the enemy' was not an appealing task for Jonah to say the least...

Simply put, Jonah just didn't want to do it and so he caught a ship that set sail in the other direction towards Tarshish. However, during the journey there was a mighty storm and Jonah was thrown overboard. Funny enough, once that happened the storm had calmed down, but by this time, Jonah was shipwrecked and had been eaten by a big fish. He was in its belly and in the dark, eventually, three days later, was spat out on the beach near to Ninevah. Jonah is *yet again* told by God to go to the people of Ninevah to tell them to turn back from their wicked goings-on - or else!

Jonah had got the message this time and went and preached to Ninevah with a warning their city and all therein would be destroyed in 40 days if they didn't repent.

Ninevah also got the message, and God showed his loving mercy as they began to live a way of goodness towards each other and to those around them.

However, Jonah was angry because he had wanted to see them punished. When Jonah rested, God provided a vine for shade - but then the next day, a worm to eat the vine. By this point, Jonah sat in the hot sun wanting to die. God scolded Jonah for caring more for the plant and his shade, rather than all the lives of the people of Ninevah....

The point the story makes for us today is that things go more smoothly when we follow God's call on our lives, step out in faith, and just get on with it, even when it's scary or not what we think it should be. The good work we do today can contribute to the goodness in the lives and world around us - and hopefully, we won't need to be eaten by a big fish to get the message!

PS - While the theme of the story of Jonah was a surprise topic for this June reflection, as I finish, it has just come to mind that the theme for 9<sup>th</sup> June's Messy Church is - 'Gone Fishing' - so there are definitely connections to be made in one way or another when we just make a start - happy fishing!

*Love and Blessings, Jacqueline*