

# RECTOR

## Introduction

A few years ago, during the hot summer months, on several occasions I came out my front door to find a very small lady with a very long pole, climbing up the very high railings outside the Church side entrance.



What, you may ask was she doing?

The answer is that she was trying to take figs from the tree...

The figs generally seem to become ripe every couple of years, but why was this lady so desperate? My first thought was: she could at least ask!... but as I remembered and reflected on that incident, and as I read about the Fig tree in Luke 13, I thought again: Are there perhaps some things we can learn from it, especially in the light of both the readings set for today? I would like to summarise this with 3 words:

## 1. COME

There is an invitation to all who are hungry and thirsty:

**Come to the waters and you who have no money, come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk, without money and without cost...** (Isaiah 55:1)



The call of God on our lives is not without challenge, but it is still an invitation to all because, as I heard said a couple of weeks ago, if the Gospel is Good News is for one, then it is Good News for all, no matter where they come from in terms of life experience or background.

The Church of England claims to be **“a Christian presence in every Community”** That should mean that where Christ and his people are present, he and we can transform things for good.

There are deep layers of history- good and bad- in every community and Bermondsey is no different, but Jesus went deeper still and as the song reminds us:

***How deep (is) the Fathers love for us.***

***How vast beyond all measure***

***That He should give His only Son...***

**Deep calls to deep** says Psalm 42:7. How deep are we prepared to go with God, for wherever that might be, he is there.

## 2. HOME

**Why spend money on what is not bread,**

**and your labour on what does not satisfy?**

**Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,**

**and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.**

**<sup>3</sup> Give ear to me and come to me;**

**hear me, that your soul may live... (Isaiah 55:2-3a)**



I like to think that the lady (and later others too) were looking for figs on our tree not only because they were hungry but also because there was something about the tree which reminded them of home- in a good way.

I also like to think that as people look through the windows of our church building they are looking through **“windows to another world”** That has always been our vision in opening up the building as much as we can and as expressed in our **Mission Statement + Mission Action Plan + through St Mary’s Got Talent** (see attachment: 03.19)

As  
Christians  
worshipping  
together in Bermondsey, we are seeking to live  
for the glory of God  
by  
following  
Jesus  
in  
the  
reality  
of  
God’s  
world

**Here for Good**  
Physical Presence  
Spiritual Presence  
Fruitful Partnerships



At first sight, we hope that the Bible, various pieces of Art and the installations displayed in the Street windows may attract the attention of passers-by and make them think again about life...

I believe this was the case with an installation last summer when Tabitha put a pile of rocks in one window and a freshly made sandcastle in the other, which gradually over the following days turned into a pile of sand as the heat dried it out- a powerful metaphor for what happens when we don’t build our lives on the rock of Jesus.



Matthew 7:24



Matthew 7:26



Later in the year, an Angel’s wing helped us reflect on the glorious wonder of God coming into the world as we looked forward to the coming of Christ;

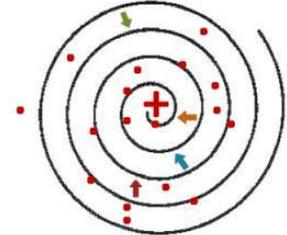
and then at the beginning of February, a small painting which I completed at the end of my Sabbatical (see above), reminded us that while we are on a journey which at



times, may be confusing, we will also see clearly, in time, when we have put our faith in Jesus. (1 Cor 13:12)

Of course we don't want people to only look through the windows, we also want them to **Taste and see that the Lord is good** (Psalm 34:8) and become the people God made them to be. Whether they come in through the doors or we go out through the doors to our families, friends, work places and homes.. Whatever we do and Wherever we are, the important thing is that Jesus is at the centre and that people are being drawn into closer relationship with him.

We have been blessed with an amazing Building. We are currently looking at how to progress Phase 3 of developing St Mary's as our base, and safeguard it for future generations, but in or out of the building, our primary calling is still to be God's people in this place. This is reflected in the following definitions of Church, produced by the Evangelist, J John and which we will be exploring later in the Spring and early Summer through our preaching series:



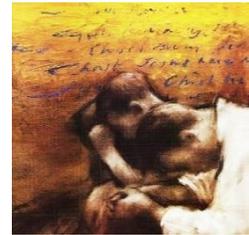
**THE CHURCH: A COMMUNITY of WORSHIP, BELONGING, HEALING, GROWTH IN HOLINESS, COMPASSION & CARE, where GOD'S GIFTS ARE USED, of PREACHING & TEACHING, of WITNESS + of PRAYER, and that brings us the third word:**

### 3. SOON

**Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near.**

**<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the evil their thoughts.**

**Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7)**



There is a well-known phrase: **Home is where the heart is**. Sadly as one singer also wrote, it can also be **where the hurt is** too... but through prayer we can reclaim those places and this place for God. After all, Psalm 24:1 reminds us:

**The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it...**

At a recent Alpha Leaders training session, we were reminded by Pete Grieg, the founder of the 24/7 Prayer Movement, that Alpha without prayer is like Alpha without batteries. God's power is released through Prayer. In all my time at St Mary's, I believe God is doing more now than ever before and I believe it is largely due to increased opportunities for prayer. This is not about making some bargain with God but rather about engaging in the Spiritual battle around us. How much more will God do if we pray more?



**CONCLUSION:** So:

Come to the waters. Why spend money on what is not bread?  
Seek the Lord while we may be found.

In all we do, let's encourage people to **COME HOME SOON...**

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24<sup>th</sup> March 2019