



St Johns
Being the Gospel to all People

24TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Greetings

**A reflection on
reading: Mark 9:38-50**

Updates

&Zoom link

Greetings my friends.

I wonder how we are all doing. I wonder if we are taking time to be present to God, to ourselves and to our neighbours (emails, texts, Zoom, phone calls) ... I want to begin by sharing with you a poem- song that has been a source of blessing for me this week.

“Hope is precious. And I cannot live without it.

Hope is Jesus. And I’ll always find that light lit.

Here in the darkness, I just can’t forget.

Even the shadows, show me that light lit.

Show me that light lit. Amen!”

Also, this week I have been reflecting on my time when I was in training at St John’s Theological College. I remember being very grateful for the opportunity to study. No sooner had we arrived at the College when all hell broke loose (a story for another day). I remember being devastated because I had always longed for an opportunity to study. As I came to the end of my first year at St John’s theological college, I was thinking I have a full scholarship and housing on one hand, but I also have all these overwhelming challenges that threaten to cripple my chances of finishing my degree on the other hand. There and then I decided that having come all that way, even if it meant a few more years, I was going to give it all I had.

I got to work studying early in the morning and late at night. By the beginning of the third year at college, I had already set a personal best getting A's and B's i.e., staying above average grades.

At the end of the third year, the craziest thing happened. I was told that I could not graduate because I did not have enough grades. Otago University would not accept my grades from my college in Kenya. Without the cross credits I was not going to graduate at the end of my third year. The problem was that I had also expended all the energy that I had thought it would take to finish my degree. I thought this is it. I am going to die. I am not going to make it. I was longing for the finishing line. It felt like someone kept moving the finishing line. Out and out and out.

I realized this week that is how I have been feeling for the last five weeks at the daily 1pm briefings. As I saw the case numbers go down, then the rest of the country dropping down in levels, and vaccination numbers growing. And as the case numbers keep bouncing about; albeit low numbers it has begun to feel like the finishing line is being moved out and out. And I found myself wondering out aloud "Where is the finishing line."

I have also become acutely aware of the residual trauma I am carrying in my body as a result of this long lockdown. I feel exhausted. I see it in my kids. I hear it in my pastoral conversations that I have been having with people. Anybody else feeling exhausted?

Here is another piece of awareness I have had this week. I don't know if this is true for any of you', but for me I have this internal go to pattern in my life that sounds like

this. It is the fallacy of “when then”. “When we finally get the vaccine then life will return to normal, and we will get into healthier life rhythms.” Or “when I finish my studies then I will make time to be with my family”. Or “when we have young families join our community then we will begin investing in our children ministry”. And the lists goes on and on.

While some of elements of those statements are true. The problem is life is always complex. Isn't it? There are always unexpected detours in life. If we wait for this perfect, unrushed utopian moment to look at the content of what is in the garage (see the previous Newsletters for context) there is a chance that it is never going to happen. Not only that but if that magical moment was somehow to occur, and there is all this glorious space in life, and probably, if we choose at that point, when nothing is going on to put stuff in the garage; life enviably does become complex again and that stuff is not going to make sense or even fit.

Here is what I have come to believe. God is here right now. So, let us not wait. Let us choose now. Let us begin investing in our relationships now. We are already here. Why not see what God has for us. Yes? Who is with me?

A Reflection on the reading: Mark 9:30-37

38 John spoke up, “Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we stopped him because he wasn’t in our group.”

39-41 Jesus wasn’t pleased. “Don’t stop him. No one can use my name to do something good and powerful, and in the next breath slam me. If he’s not an enemy, he’s an ally. Why, anyone by just giving you a cup of water in my name is on our side. Count on it that God will notice.

42 “On the other hand, if you give one of these simple, childlike believers a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you’ll soon wish you hadn’t. You’d be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck.

43-48 “If your hand or your foot gets in God’s way, chop it off and throw it away. You’re better off maimed or lame and alive than the proud owner of two hands and two feet, godless in a furnace of eternal fire. And if your eye distracts you from God, pull it out and throw it away. You’re better off one-eyed and alive than exercising your twenty-twenty vision from inside the fire of hell.

49-50 “Everyone’s going through a refining fire sooner or later, but you’ll be well-preserved, protected from the eternal flames. Be preservatives yourselves. Preserve the peace.”

Millstones. Stumbling blocks. Maimed bodies. Fire. Salt. This week's Gospel reading offers us some of the harshest and most graphic language in the New Testament.

Virtually all scholars agree that these commands of Jesus were not to be taken literally. But why such harsh language? Why "worms" and "fire" and missing limbs? Well, because the stakes are so high. Because what we do really matters. If Jesus is telling us the truth in this passage, then it is entirely possible for Jesus's beloved "little ones" to stumble because of our carelessness, our apathy, our unkindness, our dogmatism, our prejudices, our unforgiveness, our laziness, and our fear. It is even possible for them to stumble as a result of our well-intentioned efforts to protect God, protect the Church, and protect the "purity" of our religion. In chastising the outsider exorcist, the disciples were trying to keep their borders safe and secure. They didn't want Jesus's ministry to be tainted by folks who didn't have insider knowledge, precise technique, and correct dogma. "Knock it off," was Jesus's curt response. "I don't need or want that kind of protection. Look at the little ones. They're the ones who are vulnerable and need protecting. Look what you're doing to them!"

What would it look like if we at St Johns Bucklands Beach learn how to become better allies? What would it look like if we at St Johns learn how to help each other succeed? The English community supporting the Mandarin community. Our senior members befriending our youth and children. Us becoming better allies with different marginalized groups of people in our neighbourhood. Advocating and supporting them. What would happen if we expanded the circle, lengthened the table, and decided to feast together? Becoming Salt. Healing and preserving shalom in our broken and fractured world. Amen!

Update

Around the World

in 5 days

HOLIDAY PROGRAMME 24th-28th January 2022

Kia Ora,

We hope you are all surviving lockdown and amongst the uncertainty enjoying the extra time with your families. As a church lockdown has given us the unique opportunity to discover new ways of engaging together as a community over zoom and social media, learning new skills such as audio-engineering, as well as time to take stock of what we are doing and make plans for future endeavours.

Holiday Programme

As you will have seen the Government has moved Auckland into level 3 restrictions with a review date of 4th October, the day that we were meant to be starting Holiday Programme! Because of this we have decided to postpone this terms Holiday Programme until the new date of 24th-28th January. Thank you to all those who enrolled for the October Programme. If you are happy to attend the new January date, I will automatically move your enrolment (and any payments that have been made) to this date. If you are no longer able to attend this date please contact me at stjohnsholidayprogramme@gmail.com to organise reimbursement. For those that didn't have the chance to register, the enrolments for Januarys programme are now open. You can enrol by clicking on the below link (one form per child)

<https://forms.gle/yoSN6oZYoNYAV4eU6>

Community Camp

Whilst our Holiday Programme/ Youth Group leaders have been meeting via zoom over the last few weeks it was suggested that we run a camp early next year. The purpose of this camp would be for all those that are a part of our St Johns community to come together to build relationships and "Pray and Play" together. The camp will be from Friday evening on 25th February until Sunday afternoon 27th February at Hunua Fall Presbyterian campsite. This weekend away will give families the opportunity to spend time together and connect with others who may not look like ourselves

that are part of our beautiful community, and of course have a lot of fun doing so! We would like to invite our Holiday Programme families to be a part of this with us. We will let you know the finer details as they are confirmed but for now put the date in your diaries and of course feel free to email me with any questions you may have about it.

Connecting during lockdown

Over the last few weeks, we have started to find our rhythm as we have worked out how we can still join together to support each other and build relationships. As well as on-going checking in of each other during the week we have two scheduled zoom chats each week.

Friday night 7pm – Our Holiday Programme/ Youth Group leaders have been running a zoom call each Friday night **where we have invited everyone to join us for online games together.**

Sunday morning 9:30am – Jeff has been leading us in a short service each Sunday which consists of a few songs, the weekly bible reading, a short sermon and group discussion and prayers for the world followed by “Parking Lot” conversations afterwards as we check in with each other.

If you would like to join us for any of these zoom calls the meeting ID and password are below.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9895548740?pwd=VFduaXNJWCtJYnErZfVJME1NUm9JQT09>

Meeting ID: 989 554 8740

Passcode: 7777777

During lockdown we have also updated our website with a new look and current information. You can check it out on the link below or follow us on Facebook or Instagram.

[Holiday Programme – Bucklands Beach Co-Operating Parish of St Johns \(stjohnsbb.org.nz\)](http://stjohnsbb.org.nz)

[@StJohnsBB | Linktree](#)

Thanks for your on-going support,

The Holiday Programme team @ St Johns
