

## **Charles Amis Sermon - 5 July 2020**

**Matthew 11:25-30**

### 'Come to Me'

I do not know about you but when I read this passage from Matthew's Gospel I felt really quite excited. We have been through a great trial over the past five months. Many of us locked in afraid to go out and when we do I find 'social distancing' very hard. It has almost made me (us) frightened of people - KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. We have missed friends and family - missing all those lovely hugs. Who would believe we would look forward to Thursdays standing in the front garden clapping the NHS!

So here we are today together at last - hearing Jesus' words spoken 2000 years ago - words as refreshing as a dip in the sea on a hot day. Yes, faithfulness demands action and demands risk. But faithfulness is also about being present in the refreshing love of God, who cares for us and loves us. A God who is present in every moment in every day, even during the bad times as we struggle with loneliness and as we wrestle with our emotions, desires and distress. The great discipline of faith is to be present in each and every moment, trusting that God is present with you. In fact God is present with us at all times and in all places - always has been and always will be.

We have a tendency to see things in dualities - right and wrong - left and right - black and white - and sometimes it is that simple, but more often life is not that simple, especially in lock-down. Dare I go to the shops if they are open? Should I wear a mask? What is and is not safe to touch, to do? Questions that do not have a simple answer. There are questions about how we face loneliness, sickness, loss. How do I manage my finances when I cannot go to the bank? But right in the middle of all these complexities and decisions to be made stands Jesus saying, 'Come to Me'. 'Come to Me all you that are weary and carrying a heavy burden and I will give you rest.'

I will never forget the words of Alvin Jemmott (an old friend from our previous church in Welling) as he was dying of cancer he refused all invasive treatment. He had been a nurse all his working life so he knew all about it. When I asked him how can you face death with such a smile on your face? He said, 'I long to be in His presence, to be still, to be silent.'. It is not like that for everyone certainly, but for Alvin he had come to a central point of the presence and knowledge of God's love for him. For me it was like a glimpse through a peep-hole into eternity.

'Come to Me': If you are struggling - Come to Me. If you are lonely - Come to Me. If you are strong - Come to Me. If you are going through a really good time - Come to Me. If you have doubts - Come to Me.

It is all too easy to think faith is about knowledge, learning and intellectual answers. Faith is like standing in the hush of the eye of a storm as it whirls around you. It is like being the hub of a wheel as the spokes and rim spin round you. Faith is like the little boy I meet in the garden in front of this church who comes from the other side of Leighton Buzzard because he loves to play on the stones. To him every stone is a discovery, every one is different and every one special. Faith is like seeing life through the eyes of a child - the simple beauty in simple things. But like a child when things go wrong and comfort is needed he turns to his Mum and buries his face in her skirt for comfort.

Jesus says, 'Come to Me and I will give you rest'. It is this centred faithfulness trusting that He is present and the yoke is light even when the cross of Christ is heavy - it was knowing that the Father was with Him every step of the way that gave Him the strength to carry it through, even as everything else around Him had deserted Him. Knowing this to be true, being centred on Jesus, coming to Him, taking up his yoke, you have power that nothing and no-one can take away from you. You have an identity that is solid when all around is strange, the world, our world, is out of kilter. The spirit of the living God stays firm and strong and the more you come to Jesus the more you seek His peace, His yoke, His rest, you will discover a gentleness and humility that will lift you, support you and carry you through. Faith is not about working things out, it is about letting them go. That is why Jesus often used children as a model, because children know where to find comfort, where to get a hug.

So after all these months of being apart in lock-down, let us simply let go and let God and enjoy His and each other's company. Give each other a spiritual hug.

'To be in His presence,  
Not Rushing Away,  
This is our Desire O Lord,  
This is our Desire.'