

Footprints in the frost

Last week, a thick layer of frost lay on the ground. My youngest daughter asked, 'Can I walk on the grass and put footprints in the frost Mum?' She did just that and as she boldly 'crunched' across the grass she kept looking back in delight at the footprints that were following her. Her mark had been well and truly made.

The Gospel on 3rd Sunday of the year told us of how the disciples were called at the lake side to follow Jesus. We are all called to answer Christ's call to, 'Leave your nets and follow me.' (Mark 1:14-

20). To, 'make our mark.' It is a very real call for us all and my learning heart is beginning to realise that we have been graced with the talents and gifts to do just this already. Our hearts are loving hearts. There is great goodness in us all. We can doubt our ability to use these gifts but this is the very call of Jesus – to follow him, to leave these nets of doubt and to trust in our spirit filled, God like hearts instead.

'God has given us his Spirit to dwell in our hearts.' (2Corr 1:22)

There are situations in all of our lives that we feel we can't change. Areas that are harsh and frost filled. Relationships that may have broken down where once there was great love; painful memories that still haunt; the blow of judgements made that still jar; difficulties in daily lives that cause a constant worry or anxiety. With a little imagination and a brave and spirit filled heart we can bring blessing to these situations. We can bring change if we dare to use our gifts.

It is important to acknowledge that we can all feel incapable of blessing. Thoughts can enter our heads that tell us that we are not good enough, or that we don't know God well enough to bless others or that this is the job of a special chosen few. These thoughts are not of God and whenever we feel like this it is also important to remember and reflect on how we are unconditionally loved and delighted in by God. When I place my trust in God and rest in God's infinite love for me then somehow I know, deep down, that I am capable of bringing God's love and blessing to the varying situations in my life, even the most difficult ones.

So, how can we begin to answer Jesus' call to bless others? Firstly, to listen and accept that the call to follow in Jesus' footsteps is not just for some but for all of us and then, to try to use our gifts to serve others with a willing heart. In serving with a willing heart we are actually blessing the lives of those around us. It is often those things that come easily to us that are the gifts that I am talking about. We tend not to recognise them as gifts but they are. They may seem 'every day' and 'ordinary' but these qualities are the very ones that we should treasure and use to bless. It may be the welcome that you give to people as they arrive at your house; the generosity of help given to those in need; the gentle voice of healing you extend to a friend; the hours spent listening and encouraging your worried or anxious teenage children; the care shown to a partner who is bowed down with pain or stress; the meal made so willingly for your family that takes hours to prepare and minutes to demolish. All of these are our opportunities to use our gifts of 'love in action' and bless those around us. To make our mark. And when all seems too difficult and we manage to smile, we are blessing those we smile upon. **'A smile is a wonderful gift and a beautiful thing.'** (Mother Teresa).

So in the week ahead I will try...like my little daughter on the frosty grass ...to take a bold step, trust in my huge, Spirit touched, love filled heart and make my mark in the most gently and blessing of ways.

So Jesus' touch of healing grace

Lives on within our willing care;

By thought and prayer and gift we prove

His mercy still, his love we share. (Michael Perry)

