*“You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed” Luke10:41-42*

Have you ever thought how you would react if you were told the Queen is going to call at your home for tea?! Don’t be daft, you say, that would never happen! No doubt Billy & Lucy Llewellyn, who lived in a council house in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham would have thought that too. Yet, 60 years ago – on 27 May 1960 – that’s exactly what did happen!

Just imagine the work that would have gone on preparing for that visit! The house would have been cleaned like never before. No stone would be left unturned. I suspect Mrs. Llewellyn would have borne the brunt of it too! Still, Billy played his part. An employee of British Railways, he reportedly said he was up all night changing the toilet paper from BR to ER ☺ (he was something of a card was Billy: he later had a dog called Rolex; he explained that it was a watch dog ☺).

For her part, you’d guess that the Queen was much more interested in seeing how a typical working class family (they had four young children) lived. She clearly did enjoy her visit, for she stayed longer than planned – and, yes, there was time for tea and three bites of a fairy cake (in the 1960s, what else?!).

**Who’s work is it?**

No doubt Martha felt a bit like Mrs. Llewellyn when Jesus accepted an invitation to her home. Luke 10:38-42 shows her rushing around trying to make everything just so for Jesus and his disciples. She wanted the very best for her Lord. The trouble was, Jesus just came in, sat down and started speaking to the group in her home – and Martha was missing it all. She was annoyed, especially at her sister Mary for not helping her, and she told Jesus so! But, instead of reprimanding Mary, Jesus gave Martha a mild (and loving) rebuke for not first listening to his life-giving words.

Martha learned an important lesson that day. Jesus was not belittling her service. But what he did show Martha was that **before she could serve her Lord she needed first to receive from Him**. I’m sure that, once he’d finished sharing with the group, Jesus would have then said “Right, let’s have something to eat” and Mary – and no doubt others too – would have readily got up and helped Martha with the preparations. But that work was energised and transformed by the spell-binding words of Jesus.

So, as we conclude our exploration of the Holy Habit of Serving, let’s make sure that we too receive what God has for us (the instruction, guidance and inspiration) before we set out to serve Him in our works and witness. In the end, it’s all about His work, not ours!

**They think it’s all over …**

This email brings to an end our journey through the ten Holy Habits we’ve been covering these past two years. And what a journey it’s been – a mammoth undertaking! 30+ themed services, a number of special events (who could forget our unique prayer evening at Whirlow!) and 105 weekly emails – yes, 105: I’ve counted them! It’s prompted a much closer look at the characteristics of discipleship, through group discussion and the weekly email prompts; that **has** to be a plus for the church. And the emails – sent to 120 at Bents Green and shared by some with others too - have consistently attracted positive feedback for the inspiration and encouragement they’ve given, particularly during this pandemic which has made it so hard for us to be church in many other ways. The entire Holy Habits planning group has contributed, so I hope you will join me in thanking them for all they’ve given in making Holy Habits happen. I can assure you, doing and achieving this together has been a real blessing!

But what difference has it all made for **you**? Where should we go from here? Has Holy Habits left us with any things we think should continue or change in our church? And how can we help YOU be a better disciple of Jesus? We’d love to know your views! Please do drop us a line: tell it how it is (warts and all!) and help us together hear what the Spirit is saying to Bents Green at this time. Let’s get excited about what God has in store for us next!

**The Last Word**

How then should we end this 105th and last email? Well, there has to be a challenge, doesn’t there! We’ve spent 2 years exploring those 10 different marks of discipleship (there’s a reminder of what they are and when we covered them at the end of this email) but what should we do with them now? Well, the clue is in the name. Yes, we need to make them habits! All this learning will be no use unless we regularly and habitually practice the steps we have learned. To be disciples takes discipline!

So, what has challenged you during these past two years? Look through the list of habits, one by one; cast your mind back as to anything that really hit home and you thought “I’ve got to do something about that!”. Try if you can to find three such challenges, and consider how you can develop them as changes in your life which, through continual practice, become habits of Godly living.

Your mind has gone blank? (I admit mine sometimes does on these occasions!). Then let me suggest three things you might want to adopt as habits (if you don’t do them already):

* Take one minute (or more) at the start of each day to offer it, and all your plans and activities, to the Lord. Do it whenever is a good time for you: as you get up; in the shower; walking the dog; switching on your computer – whatever, just do it! “Commit your ways to the Lord” (Psalm 37:5).
* Take 3 minutes (or more) each day to read a Bible verse and briefly reflect upon it. Find a quiet space in your day that works for you – no ‘busy-ness’ excuses: just do it! Get hold of some Bible reading notes to help you, either printed or online – we or others in the church can recommend possible choices. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).
* Trust God in your troubles! Whenever you find yourself worrying about anything, then – stop! Choose instead to offer it to the Lord in prayer, and trust Him to work it out. “Do not be anxious about anything, but … with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6).

Does that sound hard? It is, if you try to do it in your own strength! Remember that the marks of the Early Church as described in Acts 2:42-47 happened because they first received the Holy Spirit in power at Pentecost. It’s not just good habits we need – it’s Holy Habits! So **make a commitment today – yes, right now, before you close down this email – to ask Jesus, through his Holy Spirit, to fill you with the desire to grow more like him, and with the dedication to do it, day by day**. He **will** do that (see Luke 11:13)! He will take your commitment as an offering and will set it alight with his power, to change your life! If that truly happens for you then you can be sure that the result will be as it was for the Early Church: “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. And changing lives is what Jesus is about – in the end, it’s all about Him.

God bless you.

*Produced by Martyn Read on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  Holy Habits was "an adventure in Christian discipleship", based on Luke's picture of the early church in Acts 2:42-47, which identifies the following 10 key characteristics of a disciple of Jesus (dates are when the topic was covered at Bents Green): Prayer [Sep-Oct 2018]; Gladness & Generosity [Nov 2018-Jan 2019]; Breaking Bread [Feb-Apr 2019]; Fellowship [May-Jun 2019]; Biblical Teaching [Jul-Aug 2019]; Making More Disciples [Sep-Oct 2019]; Eating Together [Nov 2019-Jan 2020]; Sharing Resources [Feb-Mar 2020]; Worship [Apr-Jun 2020]; Service [Jul-Aug 2020].  Find out more* [*here*](https://www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/holy-habits)*.*

1 “The day the Queen came to tea”, [The Northern Echo](https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/7115861.day-queen-came-tea/)