

Learning in Lockdown #2

Worship is Bigger

by Rev Dan Balsdon, 9th August 2020 | read online at www.revdanbalsdon.com

In John's gospel we find a story of a woman who Jesus encounters at a well. It's the heat of the day, the disciples have gone to get food and Jesus is leaning against the well when a Samaritan woman comes to draw water.

They talk, and the Woman is confused about what Jesus is saying. Jesus talks about the living water he has to offer. She doesn't understand.

Jesus says to her you worship what you do not know – we worship what we do know.

The hour is coming when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.

John 4

Lockdown has taught me that worship is bigger than I understand, or imagine, or ever intended.

Before lockdown, worship tended to be something I went to and often led. As I prepared and led my hope was always that the offering was a tapestry of music and song and words and prayer and conversation and reflection and gathering and fellowship and participation – with the hope and prayer that God's Spirit was moving as the thread that weaves it all together into a beautiful tapestry that gives God glory.

A beautiful image, but when lockdown hit, worship was no longer something I could go to. Fellowship and gathering changed. Many of my congregations are not on the internet so it wasn't feasible or inclusive in the beginning to even think about zoom and streaming.

Worship had to change for us. **But worship also had to change for me.... or maybe it was me that needed to change.**

Suddenly worship was not something I could 'go to'.

Worship now was not an event to attend, **but a practice to inhabit wherever I am.**
A way of life.

I think those words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman are words that can encourage us today as we seek to learn from lockdown.

We don't see here Jesus saying – true worshippers will worship in a building for an hour on a Sunday.

We hear Jesus say true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth – true worshippers will not let rules and restrictions (of which there were a fair few back in Jesus day) get in the way of the spirit of worship, not get in the way of the truth of the God we live to glorify and praise.

The effect of lockdown, and the absence of things to 'go to' and worship to formally lead has enabled me to begin to embrace the practice of worship in the day to day, every day.

And I know I'm not alone.

There are things people miss – I long for the day we can belt out in song from the depths of our souls – but even as we look to facilitate face-to-face gathered worship in the coming weeks, that won't happen for now.

But despite the things people miss, through time at home, in our gardens or walking in towns and hillsides people have found opportunities to worship with what they have, where they are, resources we've shared, and in doing so been meeting with God – who is with us and receives our worship no matter where we are.

People have been singing to CD's, radio and TV, gathered online, or via phone conferencing. It may not be a physical face-to-face gathering, but whether alone or in number, these undoubtedly are gatherings of God's people living a life of worship, where the Spirit weaves our offering into a tapestry that gives God glory.

Lockdown has taught me that worship is bigger, better, stronger, than I had ever truly imagined.

I wonder, as we learn from lockdown, how this might challenge us in how we worship in spirit and truth in the future?