

Two weeks ago I attended a course called 'Leadership in Lockdown'. To be honest it wasn't what I thought it was going to be about, but actually that turned out to be a good thing. The presenter spent a lot of time talking about the need to change our expectations when all that around us is also constantly changing. Setting a routine in concrete during a time when goal posts and guidance are constantly moving he suggested was counterproductive for good mental health. Instead he advocated two things. Each week – decide on a plan for that week – and don't be too ambitious. Give it a skeleton shape which reflects what will need to happen for this week only. He suggested this include everything from work commitments to exercise and eating plans.

Then to compliment this, he suggested that each day over breakfast, you select three and only three, tasks for that day which need to be achieved. If more gets done that's great, but allow your expectation to be three. Then at the end of the day acknowledge how it has gone.

One of the reasons that I found all of this really helpful is that I had grand plans at the start of lock down for all that I was going to do and create and be – and while some has been achieved, most has not. I can really relate to the words of Paul to the Romans' - *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate*<sup>1</sup>. How many times have any of us uttered these same words? Paul in this passage seems to lament his ability, and the ability of all believers to hold on to what is true. He ponders this throughout the whole passage.

Paul in his struggle begins to understand that, in his terms, he cannot have what he desires by simply observing the law. Rather, righteousness must be accepted as a gift from God alone, and experienced within the framework of the spirit. In other words, while parameters provide us with a guide, we need to be open to what God is doing in the here in and now, and this will involve changing expectations and behaviour. God is holding us and guiding us, and we need to let God do this.

This is also the issues which Jesus is addressing as he speaks in Matthew 11 – you say you want one thing and when it is given to you, you want another! This passage starts with Jesus frustration and yet concludes with Jesus offer of comfort – he says 'look I know this is all too much for you – so just let go and I will carry you!'

A few years ago of a friend who helped me understand this passage in a new way. My friend had just taken possession of her first mobility scooter. She had never driven a car or bike, and steering was a new thing. When she took possession of the scooter, her instructor told her that if all else fails, let go of the handles, as this turns off the motor, and the scooter will stop. 'Let Go and it will stop'.

What a great strap line for life 'To Stop – let go!'

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:15

How many expectations or situations do we face in life which escalate or cause us sleepless nights because we keep the motor running? How much would it transform our understanding of ourselves and even the situation if we just let go!

Now letting go is different to giving up. Letting go, means we relinquish the power, or even perceived sense of power that we have – to see where the journey might take us.

Sometimes we have to let go of our expectations, of how we think the world should be - if we are to move forward. Jesus, having just told the disciple's what discipleship would mean, almost immediately challenges their expectations of this-step outside of how you think it will be or should be. Look at how it is now!

We are living in new times, and many of our certainties have changed, but God has not. Whether we are challenged that the patterns of life that don't seem to work for us; or like Paul we do *not do what we want, but we do the very thing we hate*; or if like the disciples we keep changing our minds - whatever the challenge that is facing us, God reminds us that we need to let go of what we are expecting - to stop, let go – and probably most importantly – notice that God is holding us, and moving us forward. Amen