

'Life is what happens while you're busy making plans!' I wonder how often we may feel that this is the reality of our life. That planning takes more time and dreaming than the actual living!

I often think of phrase when I think about Peter. Peter the rock – who had the courage to say that Jesus was the Messiah – who had solid expectations about how Jesus was going to transform the political and social landscape of Israel – suddenly had Jesus predicting his death and the disciple's persecution. This was not what Peter had expected – it was not his vision for the God who had come to save them! Last week Peter was adamant Jesus would save them in the way Peter wanted --- and now!

Peter and most of the disciples followed Jesus, not just because they believed he was the Messiah – but because they thought that the Messiah would end the oppression that the people of Israel experienced at the hands of the Romans. The Zealots believed that God would free them from the hands of their oppressors and Israel would be free to rule once more.

When Jesus starts preparing the disciples for his journey to Jerusalem and the fact that this journey would most likely end in his death, they were unsettled – this wasn't the kingdom of God they were hoping for. God was not behaving in the way that they had hoped.

On the one hand Peter knows that Jesus is offering a different way forward – but in another way it is beyond his comprehension. This is so often the case for us too. We know that everything is not about us, that we have to make changes to our way of life so that peace and justice might impact on the world. But it is also hard for us to imagine what that world might look like, and how we might behave differently.

How do we change the world – how do we help? How are we not overwhelmed by a world full of injustice and cruelty?

Well the message Jesus shared invites us to: live lives shaped by love and forgiveness and actions shaped by compassion and hope. Or as Jesus told Peter 'take up your cross'.

Now that doesn't mean we have to accept pain or death or suffering. Rather it is about embracing God's message of love – a message that calls us to imagine a world that could be different – a world which does not have outcomes that we control or maybe even expect – but a world where God is at work, giving us a taste of life we'd never thought possible and multiplying the impact of our actions far beyond what we'd dreamed. A world when just as it felt like we'd lost our lives, we find them.

It takes a great deal of imagination and a great deal of courage to see how we might act differently – how we like Peter might see that there is a different way of changing the world. Too many of the ways we imagine see us, or our nation still in power. But what if power was understood and used differently. What, if for a start, we

wept for all who have died because of their race or poverty? What if we shared our resources, not just with those who are visibly poor, or begging, but those who hide that they are struggling just to survive each day? What if we believed, or even imagined, that the capacity to change this community was within this room? That is the message that Jesus is trying to get Peter to see!

So how is this love expressed in practical terms? Let it be genuine, let it hate evil! Let it be unfailing - Paul says. Such love requires us to live alongside hate, by living in such a way that fosters peace, to recognise when our behaviour is part of the problem. These are powerful words, and call us to challenging actions.

I don't know about you, but I like my life. I like living with you, being part of this community. I like that we share stories together, support each other. But this life, this comfort exists on the back of other pain - and I find that challenging. The outcome Peter sort from Jesus was only possible by letting go of what he had - and that should be confronting for us all.

The heart of today's is a message of love which is built on the image of taking up the cross and following Jesus. The cross cannot be sought, it is the life that happens often when we are busy planning. It is the consequence of learning how to live alongside all humanity in love. It is not easy and it is not clear. But it is possible. Amen.