

Sunday 3rd May

Read John 10.1-10

Reflection

Revd Ben Edwards (Curate)

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

When I think of ‘abundant life’, I picture in my mind the rainforests. Teeming with all kinds of life, from great apes to the tiniest hummingbird, undiscovered species creeping in various holes and crevices, on and within the trees.

Dramas and trials unfolding in microcosms; battles to the death, desperate struggles of predator and prey, communities of insects completing their allotted tasks, elaborate courtship rituals, the morning routine of reptiles climbing to reach the sun, birds flitting between the trees like fighter pilots jinking through clouds of lush greenery, emeralds and olives and lime and chartreuse, firework flowers bursting here and there – hot pink, candy apple red and fiery salamander orange.

The chittering wings of dragonflies, the sawing croak of hidden frogs and the deep, mournful call of howler monkeys. Sweet, zesty aromas compete with heady vanillas, and the occasional pungency of jarringly offensive scents from sinister-looking blooms deep in the shadow of thousands of trees...

Life abundant. Rich, diverse, variously beautiful and plain and ugly, serene and arduous. And Jesus came that we may have this life, more and more of it. He is leading us to it, calling us to it. But are we following? Are we listening? Are we hearing? Do we recognise His voice, or are other voices shouting louder?

The voice of Christ isn’t – a loud, braying, condemning, excluding voice. It doesn’t try to sell us anything. It doesn’t call us to follow Him to palaces or grand homes. It doesn’t ask us to board shining automobiles. It doesn’t instruct us to shun anyone, or to close ranks. It doesn’t tell us to work harder or look more presentable or be thinner or be curvier or be more muscular or be fitter. It doesn’t tell us to all look and act exactly alike to be able to follow Him. These, perhaps, are the voices of the thieves and robbers Jesus talks about in the gospel.

The voice of Christ **IS** – silent, stilling, inviting, gentle. It gives freely of its abundance. It calls us to follow Him to quiet night, to wilderness, to mountains, to a lonely hill, to the tomb, to a garden, to a road, to a room. He asks us to walk with Him, inviting others along, arms open. He asks us to follow – there are no caveats as to who may make the journey. The voice of Christ speaks to ALL creation and says ‘follow me’ – to the Cross, to the tomb, and then out the other side to eternal, abundant life.

Life in all its fullness – a life as colourful and noisy and fragrant and as diverse as the rainforests. And like the rainforests, a life that my words cannot explain or give you the experience of. The only way to know it is to go to it and journey through it and with it, to experience it.

Our lives at this time may seem stymied, to be constricted, dark and tomblike even. Perhaps that is so. However, let us, through our prayers, listen for the voice of God in our world, in our lives, in our thoughts and in our hearts. Let us be ready to leave the fold with Him when we rise from this particular tomb, and leave the voices of thieves and robbers behind, and into the lush, verdant abundance of life with Christ.