

May these words be pleasing and acceptable.

OK. Come and see, go and tell. That seems to be one of the headlines from today's (long!) reading – thank you Chris.

✦ We've got the Samaritan lady coming to the well and seeing Jesus. In this remarkable short meeting she, the Samaritan, saw in Jesus, the Jew, a man she knew to be the Messiah, she knew to be the Christ, she knew to be God. She would then go and tell, go and tell her neighbours and friends, and they too would know God. ✦ Come and see, go and tell.

Some of us have heard this story many times. We know that this meeting between Jesus was unexpected and surprising, not least to the disciples of Jesus. Had Jesus forgotten that for a man and woman to meet in broad daylight was not right if not married or related? Had Jesus forgotten that he was a Jew, a group that hated the Samaritans? Had the woman forgotten that she was a Samaritan, a group that hated the Jews? Two physical differences that were meant to be a barrier to keep them apart and yet in this story today, in this short meeting, the man and the woman, the Jew and the Samaritan are brought together for this short meeting at the well. She comes for water, to drink and to wash. She leaves with much more, the living water that gives eternal life. Come and see, go and tell ✦

OK, can I come back to that story later because now I wish to play a guessing game! There are four pictures that are all to do with a single theme. Getting the theme from just the first picture is very hard, you might stand a chance after two pictures, perhaps more will get it after the third picture and hopefully most of us will have got there by the end of picture 4. Ready? This is picture 1 (St John's Gourock). 2? Jacob Reece Mogg. (?). 3 – A birthday cake. (?). 4 – the washing of a pair of hands. What links them together? (Not just washing hands). Happy birthday, national anthem, hymns! (viral / facebook).

✦ So – Brett, soap, t-towels.

So this is a remarkable thing. A word has gone out around the world, we have listened, and we have changed. This is the word helpfully written by a pilot in the sky in Australia. ✦ The message has got out there: Wash your hands. This is a remarkable thing. This virus, this threat, *is* physical but is unseen, and for most of us unknown (I don't yet know anyone whose ill) *and yet* people throughout the world have rightly responded to this invisible physical threat and we wash our hands. You see people in toilets, in classrooms, in shops, here in church, cleaning our hands, and so we should.

Where is the good news – in what way can we bring reassurance and optimism to an anxious world?

Psalm 24: Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? The person who has clean hands and a pure heart. Only-such-a-person can be with or God. Jesus at the well was unclean because he had talked to this dirty Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman at the well was

unclean because she had talked to this dirty Jewish man. Both put aside these physical barriers that should have kept them apart. There is a much greater law, the greatest law of love, for each other, for all who they and we might meet. And in such meetings, where physical barriers are broken down, God is found. ✠Come and see, go and tell. ✠

Psalm 24 is a gateway passage. It introduces people to the Christian faith. Who is worthy to be with God? Only those with clean hands and a pure heart *and that's not you and that's not me and that's not the woman at the well*. Yet she receives the living water of Christ, *as do we*. ✠God builds a bridge in Christ across the gap that we have made, and to offer a route for us cross with cleansed hands and purified hearts.

✠Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

The world, our world has learnt, has relearnt the need for clean hands. Not just to clean them once but as they so quickly get dirty again they need to be cleaned again, and again. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our world today learnt, relearnt the need for clean hands and a pure heart before God. The woman at the well overcame physical barriers and was cleansed by the living waters of Christ. Can we alongside the physical need to regularly wash our physical hands, can we regularly find space for God, find the time to talk to God, to say sorry, and to be made clean. Perhaps every time we wash our hands we also remember God, we say sorry and we give thanks for his presence with us, wherever we are, his loving presence with us.

Many times, yesterday, I washed my hands because they were dirty. But then there's the moments of prayer and knowing the presence of God. I heard my first skylark of the year, there's sadness that there's less birds than there used to be, but still a feeling of joy and optimism. There's time with the boys on a weekend, time on the phone with Gillian (she's away), sadness that I don't have more time with them, and a desire to do better, to love them more, and a firm belief that God will help me if I let him. And, why not, whilst washing my hands, I had that same mix of being sorry and thankful and optimistic as I remembered the presence of God with each of us.

This is the good news in an anxious world. God is with us. This our gospel does not ignore nor magically gets rid of anything that is bad in the world but God always lives us wishing to calm our fears. Whatever we have said or done in the past, whatever faces us in the future, God will *never* leave us to face things alone.

So what do we tell our anxious family and friends? We wash ourselves, our hands, to keep ourselves clean, and we do so again and again and again. And we remember our God of love, and we do so again and again and again, praying that he makes in us a clean heart. Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

And our gospel message: Come and see, go and tell.