

I have a deep appreciation for the spirituality of Psalms. And I often wonder whether we overlook them at times within our worship and within preaching. The psalms are so rich and filled with emotion and to not use the psalms to preach with is to forget that very live part of our faith. The get up and go part of our spirituality. The Psalms can bottle the writers deepest emotions. The laments, the fears, the anger, the adoration and the joys of the writer, and above all psalms shows the honesty and openness of the psalmist to express their relationship with God, their deep spirituality. Everyone has a spirituality – whether or not they are a person of faith. A spirituality – implicit or explicit, cultivated or neglected – is simply the way in which people cope with their life.

The Psalms as a biblical genre, help us to understand how to express the God we experience and how we can express our ways of life in this world. Through the Psalms the psalmist is given the space to express themselves, about God, the world, their relationships and ultimately the psalmists can learn a little more about themselves. The psalms are of course written on pages, but they are designed to be sung, to be shouted. The psalms are brutally honest accounts of a person’s faith, of a person’s trials and tribulations with the world.

A book I would commend to all is called Psalm Redux by Carla Grosch-Miller a United Reformed Church minister in Oxford City. It isn’t the most remarkable book to read, which is odd for a book that I recommend. But it is what this book does which is worth taking note. This book takes some of the psalms and as Grosch-Miller describes, she restores and refreshes them. Grosch-Miller describes her need to refresh the psalms, as a longing to reconnect with the meanings and emotions of the psalms by putting them into her own language and in the context of her own life and experiences. She takes

many of the psalms and line by line rewrites them. Psalms are expressions of faith, poetry that proclaims outwardly the psalmists deepest most inward feelings, toward their living faith. Above all, psalms are personal. Grosch-Miller therefore argues that they only make sense if we step into the psalms. If we heavily contextualise them into our own lives then they can be for us articulations of our own faith and or own understandings of God.

The psalms are a particular genre in the bible that actually sometimes only make sense through the retelling. Through the ability to shout alongside the psalmist, or to cry or to laugh. To dare to live honestly.

We are all called to express our living faith in much the same way. Not to talk about what we have learnt about the world and God, but to proclaim the deepest parts of our souls, in order to bring around a better world. It is through action, through living out the gospel in honesty which makes someone heard. Not many people know about theologians, I know that many will have not heard of William Temple or John Henry Newman and even fewer will have heard of the German theologians Schwizer, Schleiermacher or Sckilabeex **but** I know many many people will know in recent times about a woman in France photographed in a swimming costume fashioned like a burkur being forced to remove it by French police. A woman who for her beliefs, expressed herself, in a way so bold and so unapologetic.

That ultimately is the psalmists calling, to express themselves boldly and unapologetically, whatever the cost. If I would like to leave you all with one message to take home with you this morning, it is that we all have the calling to be a psalmist, because being brutally honest with the world, is what brings about change.

In reading this morning's Gospel of the lost sheep, it is quite easy to hear the words of a calm Jesus. Of a Jesus who goes round telling nice stories, in order for people to understand the world that little bit more. However in preparing for this morning I can only read that Gospel in my head with Jesus shouting. I can imagine the Pharisees behind Jesus' back "oooh you should hear who he has been socialising with!" and for Jesus to turn on his heel and say "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine and search for the one you had lost!" A not so meek and mild Jesus, but a bit of a social activist. The side of Jesus that we so often forget. The shouty Jesus

We can often remove any emotion from Christ within our retelling, and we can turn the memory of Jesus into someone who was a 'do-gooder' when perhaps we should be remembering him as a risk taker, a man of the upmost brutal honesty when it comes to his emotions. A social activist, at whatever the cost. Perhaps then, when we think on this Jesus, we might start to feel a sense of comfort in being honest with God. A sense of security in shouting, screaming or even wailing when we need to. Christian spirituality isn't refined and genteel, it is honest, its gritty and real, and we as humans should be blunt and unapologetic when it comes to expression.

If we consider what I think will be one of those iconic images of 2016 of a Muslim woman daring to express her faith on a French beach by wearing something that guarded her modesty. Perhaps here we can see a glimpse of Jesus. And an example of a living psalmist in society. Someone who lives out their faith in openness and honesty. I can very easily imagine a psalm like monologue in the head of that woman on a French beach.

Perhaps Psalm 2

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together against the Lord and his anointed.

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision.

This was a person who was not going to sit back, while what she knew as an injustice was being allowed. And of course neither should we. We should never rest on our laurels or be comforted by scripture in a way that makes us deadened to the world. Our psalms are there within our scriptures to be relived. To be examples of proclaimed faith.

We are all called to be psalmists, it is our duty and our joy. It is through being honest with the world that we might bring about change. As we go through life living as a psalmist, someone who is free to shout, to cry to laugh and proclaim their faith from the roof tops, we have the freedom to live theology in real time. And of course this is our duty in the knowledge that many around the world cannot express their faith with the freedom that we can. It is our ability to speak up, to proclaim our faith in public that can change our world. The braveness to be honest with the world is what we are called to do, in order to challenge unjust systems, to seek out the lost and to find that one lost sheep.

