

# SERMON NOTES Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## sunnysidechurch

Theme: **Together not alone**

Passages: **Luke 8:42b-48, Romans 12:1-10**

**Some of the main themes from the sermon**

**'It is not good to be alone'**

One of the great but hard to grasp truths of our faith is that God is three and also one. We see God's plurality in unity in the most profound biblical texts like Genesis 1 and John 1. When God reflects that 'it is not good for the man to be alone' (Gen 2:18), he is drawing humankind into the sort of relationship and community that God himself is and has. We were made for community.

**Loneliness, competitiveness and emotional self-isolation – three different tragedies**

That way of being fell from our grasp when humankind turned away from God as the story of the fall so poignantly recounts (Gen 3). Our fellowship with God and each other was shattered. Three different types of fractured relationship developed: Loneliness, competitiveness and emotional self-isolation. Each of them robs people of a fullness of life that God wills for all his human creatures.

**Jesus and God's restoration project**

Jesus came so that (we) may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Fullness of life can only be experienced in community, in fellowship. When Jesus heals the woman with a haemorrhage in our Gospel reading, he is restoring her not only physically but also socially. That also explains why Paul writes as he does to the church in Rome (Rom 12:1-10). As different members of Jesus' body we discover and exercise our unique gifts and become the people we were made to be. Competitiveness is replaced by complementarity; loneliness is eased by fellowship and self-isolation is melted by the love of other pilgrims.

**A city on a hill**

We are called to live life as a resurrection community (see Rom 12:1-2). People should see that there is a different way of being which attracts and challenges them.

**Living with loneliness**

This is not to say that we may avoid experiencing the sadness of loss. That is part of the price of loving another person in a world where disease and death, the final enemy have still to be defeated. The love of friends and family can provide support but can't bring the loved one back.

**Practical points for God's people in a world of fractured relationships**

- Seek out people who are lonely. This may need to be a team effort
- Talk the talk of appreciation rather than competitiveness
- Should we, as Sunnyside Church be investing in someone to work with older people, as we do with children, families and young people.

**Some questions for thought and discussion this week:**

1. *Have you ever felt lonely? What, if anything, helped you?*
2. *What do you think we as a church could do to support people who are lonely?*
3. *Competitiveness and emotional self-isolation can break bonds of fellowship and cause us to be isolated from others. Are you aware of these as real issues in the circles you move in -family, friends, colleagues, neighbours?*
4. *In Romans 8:4-8, Paul says that we all have different gifts and functions in the body of Christ (the church). What do you think your gifts might be and how can you use them? Commentators see Paul's list as illustrative rather than definitive, so don't feel constrained by it.*
5. *Are there any other issues that the sermon or the bible passages raise for you?*

**A definition of loneliness and some statistics:**

**'Loneliness is a state of distress or discomfort that results when we perceive a gap between our desire for social connection and our actual experiences of it'.**

- **Half a million older people go at least 5 or 6 days without seeing or speaking to anyone**
- **Approximately 4 million older people see TV as their main source of company**
- **36% of adults agree that their neighbours are like strangers to them**
- **39% of people said that they hadn't had a meaningful conversation with someone in a fortnight**
- **Loneliness affects people of all ages**

**(Sources: Red Cross and Age UK)**