

This is one of a series of my reflections based on the banners that are hanging in St Peters and St Paul's Church, Aylesford. There are 8 banners:

GOD Listens	GOD Enables
GOD Loves	GOD Provides
GOD Creates	GOD Encourages
GOD Cares	GOD Lives

Other banner reflections will follow but in the meantime a printed version of the series of reflections is available in the church.



## GOD CARES

**M**ark, in the first chapter of his Gospel says that people brought to Jesus all the sick and those who had demons. All the people of the town of Capernaum gathered with him and he healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons. Mark gives us the impression almost of a travelling chemist or surgery to which everyone might come with ailments of every kind and find help and healing.

Reading any account of a healing act by Jesus reveals his true character. The signs are there each time. Take the healing of the deaf man in the seventh chapter of Mark. Jesus took the man aside from the crowd so that they could be alone. He could now give this poor, suffering man, individual attention and care as well as his own consideration and love. Deaf and dumb people are often quite embarrassed by their disability, somewhat more so than blind

people and therefore by taking him aside Jesus was focusing on him and him alone. There were crowds following Jesus around wherever he went. Yet performing an act of healing was not something Jesus wanted to perform in front of a large gathering of people. Being deaf and dumb is hard enough today. In Jesus' time it must have been very hard indeed. They were, more than likely, made fun of, thought of as subhuman. But Jesus didn't care, because he wanted to show care to this one man. And so followed the miracle cure. Jesus puts his hands on the man's ears and touched his tongue with his spittle. Jesus looks up to God, speaks the words and the man is healed.

What better example is there, of Jesus' individual treatment to those that need it most? The man was not some kind of test case, someone seen as some sort of guinea pig on whom Jesus could show his miracle powers so that other people might believe. The man was suffering, he needed healing and Jesus took pity on him. It was only in this way that the man could understand what was going on.

The same applies to the account of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. The same characteristics flow through the account. And what about the crippled man lowered through a hole in the roof to where Jesus was sitting. This was quite an unorthodox method employed by his friends but there were so many people clambering to see Jesus that this seemed the only, if somewhat unconventional method, to use to make sure Jesus noticed their friend in dire need. Yet, with all those people there, Jesus spoke directly to the paralysed man and despite all the debate and arguments surrounding Jesus' words and actions with many accusing him of being blasphemous, Jesus focused directly and totally on the man in desperate need, having pity on him and his friends, showing his compassion in such a vivid and poignant way and healing his disease.

God cares and he cares for the individual person and the individual person alone. This is shown so many times in the accounts of Jesus' ministry. Jesus entered into the heart and mind of the people he sought to help. He could think their thoughts and feel their feelings. The people being cured understood what Jesus was doing and why – touching their eyes, spitting on their tongue, making them stand up and walk.

In simple terms Jesus was putting all those suffering into his spotlight. They are the focus and they alone. They get individual treatment. Even when thousands of people were following his every move, he was still willing to focus on a particular person's need. Once in his spotlight, that individual was surrounded by personal care, attention and healing.

C S Lewis wrote in his book *Mere Christianity*: "God is not hurried along in the Time-strewn of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel....YOU ARE AS MUCH ALONE WITH HIM AS IF YOU WERE THE ONLY BEING HE HAD EVER CREATED...His life is not dribbled out moment by moment like ours ....If you picture Time as a

straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as a whole page on which the time line is drawn.”<sup>1</sup>

There is, of course, something missing that we haven't considered. It is our faith that switches the spotlight on. Time and time again, in these accounts of Jesus' healing ministry it was the faith of the sufferers that ensured their healing – faith in Jesus that he could do all these things and much, much more. To a Christian, to any of us, at any time, facing pain or reeling from some shattering disappointment, or struggling with bereavement or facing any kind of problem, the reassurance of Jesus' care, of God's care comes as a healing hand to a troubled heart, mind and body. We become focused in God's spotlight.

Henry Lyte's well-known hymn voices the true response of us all:

Father like he tends and spares us  
Well our feeble frame he knows  
In his hands He gently spares us  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise Him, Praise Him,  
Widely as his mercy flows

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<sup>1</sup> CS Lewis *Mere Christianity* (1952)