

Here we have Jesus turning his face to Jerusalem. Here we have the heart and the centre of the message of our faith. And here we have why people in the west are not following in a queue to be part of the church. For many it is not that they have not heard our message, nor that they do not understand it....they do and it is too much. They are right. It is way too much to do in your own strength and understanding.

If you think you can sort out life. If you think you can make life comfortable, manageable. If you think life is smooth then the Christian good news is jarring indeed.

Jesus has been travelling around Galilee and now he leaves that teaching life behind to go towards death. Peter has troubles with that. Jesus is tempted by Peter's comments. Peter is not Satan but his words are the words of Satan to Jesus. Jesus is not an idiot. He is not someone who has not relished life on earth. It will be a big thing for him to leave. He knows about wine and friends and food and massage, beautiful perfume filling the air. But that has to be given up for a bigger cause. It is a well-worn path to point a finger at Peter and laugh at his whacky comments at the Transfiguration and here about criticising Jesus. We need to remember it is the tradition of the church that Mark is the earliest of the gospels and it contains the memories of Peter. If you compare the other Gospels with Mark you will see that Peter becomes more and more sensible as time goes by and they represent the stories. Here we get the man in all his uncut form. Humble? You bet. But strong in his knowledge and love of the Lord. How many of us would have the moral courage to tell that tale and paint ourselves in such a light?

Did you think being a Christian was about ease? Did you think it was about going to church? A time to sing a few songs and pay into the kitty amounts of money you would not even miss if they fell out of your pocket? Like Abraham and Sarah we are called to leave the ease and the comfort of what is familiar behind and venture out. To move. Maybe not physically but definitely in terms of developing our thinking, our service, our behaviour our giving. Ease is not the life to which we are called. We follow the man who dies on the cross. Why would we think we were called to ease? Rigour, discipleship sacrifice these are our words.

Yes you are right...really rubbish selling point. Form a queue to hear about sacrifice and discipline is not going to be much of a selling point. And yet. And yet. People are looking for something big to give their lives too. The story in the paper of a woman who left her baby at home to go to fight Ebola. The aid workers who put themselves at risk, indeed lose their lives. Our brothers and sisters in Christ who sing the Lord's songs even though they are daily at risk of death. When the woman, staff member who runs KURC's building gets home each day her husband asks her, how many times she was told to 'f' off today? Why would she do that? Simple. She sees her work in the context of serving Christ. In the face of following Jesus the usual human qualities of safety and gain are to be relinquished. We are to take up our cross. This is an active choice. It is not resignation. Nor is it the tolerance of pain it is a positive decision. Brave. Bold. Positive. Is it possible that we have painted our gospel as too small so that it is not really a challenge. Not enough to inspire. I do have experience in my life in ministry of asking people to do a small job and they will not step up

yet they do step up for big one. Something to inspire. To challenge.

So we come to the table and what have we pointers of broken ness. Signs of sacrifice. Bread that is ripped apart and wine that is poured out. These are not the things of ease. Rest. Peace. Calm. These things are gifts that come as a consequence of us following Jesus. They are not the focus of our lives. Resurrection is not displayed here. Yet we know that too is true.

Mistakes belong to Lesley M Charlton