



Lord God, thank you for your faith in us and the transforming power of the Gospel. Grant us strength, compassion and resourcefulness as we reach out to others with the good news. Amen.

Finding God in the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

One of our beautiful ducks went missing at the beginning of last month and I thought the fox had been round and taken and killed her. It was a sad day and although I spent over an hour looking, I simply couldn't find her. After two

weeks she appeared in the early morning demanding food and then disappeared again only to reappear almost every morning. After a month she has emerged from her hiding place and has with her a troupe of five tiny ducklings. While I thought she was dead she was busy sitting on her eggs in a secret place. Her work was hidden and costly like all stories of birth and it was full of surprise just like the Easter story. Out of loss has come new life and out of hiddenness has come great joy and delight for us. It's enough to marvel and give thanks. 🍷

“What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step.”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian

Reaching out

Caroline Fletcher *reflects on* Matthew 9:35 – 10:8 [9-23]

Despite opposition from the Pharisees, Christ heads out, driven by heartfelt compassion, to take the good news to the cities and villages. The actual word translated as “compassion” in our reading is the strongest word the Greek language has for this feeling, denoting deep emotion. Unlike the Pharisees, whose attitude was one of judgement towards those they considered sinners, Christ was moved by love for people who were distant from God. And, rather than condemning ordinary folk for their lack of godliness, he held the religious leaders responsible for how they had drifted from God. He recognised the crowds as “sheep without a shepherd” – an unprotected, unguided and

abandoned flock, as helpless and vulnerable as sheep before wolves.

Jesus’ mission was to reach out to these lost people and bring them back to God. He believed vast numbers would be open to his message, proclaiming the harvest to be plentiful. But he needed help, and so he prayed for more people to join him in his work, before commissioning and sending out his twelve disciples. Indeed, Matthew emphasises that by doing this the disciples were actually continuing Christ’s work.

When we feel daunted by the task of continuing Christ’s mission, let us be encouraged by Jesus’ optimistic belief in the transforming power of the Gospel and God’s ability to work through and protect us, as we reach out with the good news. 🍷

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

by Jane Williams

For the next five weeks, Jane Williams takes us through some of the ideas from this great modern Christian classic.

Lewis’ book is an expanded form of a series of radio talks that he gave in the 1940s, so he writes not necessarily for a Christian audience. Importantly, he deliberately avoids talking in detail about the issues that divide Christians, aiming instead for “mere” Christianity – the faith all Christians can recognise.

His starting point is that all human cultures have a concept

of right and wrong, what he calls a “rule of decent behaviour”, even if this is not identical across all times and places. Human beings understand and agree a rule but do not always obey it.

By contrast, the non-human world is governed by “rules” or “nature”, which it simply obeys without thinking about it. Lewis points out how odd this is, and suggests that “somebody or something from beyond the material universe was actually getting at us”.

The rule of decent behaviour is universally understood, yet not quite natural to us. Could it be that is because it comes from God? 🍷