

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

19 March 2017: Dom Clarke - Pioneer Minister to Beacon Church Plant, Bordon

Consider the Lillies

Right now, on 'planet church' we are in the period of time called lent, following the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness at the very start of his ministry. And what does it seem we churchy folk all have to do in lent? We get miserable! It seems like we are not allowed to be happy! If we are really generous we can call it a time of reflection, self-denial, and discipline.....but I confess now that I really dislike it. It's all just so depressing.

So, to alleviate myself from this depressive experience I was lucky enough to come across a painting recently by the 20th Century artist Stanley Spencer called 'Consider the Lillies' and for me this really started to bring together a new and positive approach to this time and I have to say that it has really started to transform things for me.



In the painting (you can find it at <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-consider-the-lilies>) we see a rather plump and contented Jesus utterly absorbed in some wildflowers reflecting the bible passage found at Luke 12: 27. In the painting Jesus has a sense of wonder, and a child-like posture of total absorption. He is distracted and playful as if he is seeing these everyday flowers anew with fresh and wonder-filled eyes.

As I say, this painting made me think about a reclaimed meaning for lent that I want to propose, as a time to look like Jesus with fresh and wondering eyes

- At the beauty of the world around us?
- At our relationship with God in that busyness which the world tempts us into?
- At our relationships with one another?
- Our time and how we use it?
- (And most importantly perhaps) at how generous, kind and loving we are with ourselves?

Jesus says to me in the scriptures "Get over yourself! Look at a flower, which is nothing, but has the purest beauty and the most wonderful perfection without any worry or effort. So, why should you worry?" So I wonder, what could you look at again with fresh and wonder-filled eyes this lent? Could you look again at some of your relationships? Are they healthy? How about your neighbours, your home, your church, your enemies? Or....the hardest one of all – yourself? Can you look again with fresh and wondering eyes and see the beauty and perfection in you? The only view of yourself that God ever sees.

