

Do you know the poem, 'If' by Rudyard Kipling? You remember how it starts? 'If you can keep your head when all around you are losing theirs and blaming it on you..'

Can you remember how it finishes?

'If you can fill the unforgiving minute, with sixty seconds worth of distance run,
yours is the earth and everything that's in it, and what is more, you'll be a man, my son!'

What do you think? Do you agree? Disagree?

Hazel was telling me about a very different approach that our friend Mary in Albrighton has been speaking about this Lent. I gather that Mary was giving out these wristbands at CITV - 'I'm not busy'. I'm sure that went down well! The wristband links to a website called 'www.notbusy.co.uk'. There you are challenged to give up being busy for Lent.

I wish I'd found out about it earlier. But there's still time. Here's what the challenge is really about:

People who give up busyness for Lent will each find their own way of doing it. However, the core idea is to spend a limited time each day – between 10 and 30 minutes - doing absolutely nothing, just letting time pass.

This challenge will be far more transformative than a busy person like you can imagine. It will be a real challenge – quite difficult, actually.

That is why we are inviting people to share their stories and encourage others. Have conversations – real or virtual – about it:

"Did you do nothing today?" "Yes, it was great."

"Are you busy?"

"No way! But I feel alive and am getting loads done."

It's quite a radical idea, isn't it? How would you manage?

The website has some top tips:

Decide never to describe yourself as busy.

Don't let others get away with saying "I thought you'd be too busy". *That's a good one for clergy.*

Take some time out to do nothing every day. Time it. Sit still. Let life be.

Make a two-column To Do list regularly. One column is entitled "Must Do", the other "May Do".

Draw up a list of things you are not going to do (your "Don't Do" list).

Tell someone else that you are giving up busyness and ask them to monitor you for "white rabbit behaviour".

White rabbit behaviour - rushing around, constantly watching the clock, too busy to stop and talk, to stop and think - or just to stop.

But surely, you might say, stopping to do nothing for 10 minutes is just being lazy? It's wasting valuable time? No, says the website, being busy is actually lazy - we aren't really stopping to sort out our priorities. And it points out that time is precious, and we waste time when we rush through life being busy.

What has all this got to do with our readings today? Well, our reading from 1 Corinthians is about foolishness and wisdom. Rudyard Kipling and our society say that to get the most out of life you have to fill the unforgiving minute to the brim with busyness. The 'not busy' campaign says that God's wisdom is different. To really get the most out of life we need to stop, and do nothing. Or maybe do what my Lent promise says, that I picked up at the alternative service - stop each day and take time to remember I am loved.

Jesus was a terrible time waster. As soon as he had begun his ministry - after he was baptised - he went into the wilderness and did nothing for 40 days. 40 days! But those 40 days made all the difference to the next three years.

I don't know if you've seen our Lent prayer focus. A few people have been adding things which have helped them on their journey with God. Margaret Bills put this, which she remembered hearing at a service at St. Mary's, Redcliffe in Bristol some years ago. It's called 'Holy Waste' - I'll just read part of it...

'The history of mankind is the history of men and women who wasted themselves and were not afraid to do so. They did not fear the waste of themselves, of other men, of things in the service of a new creation. They were justified, for they wasted all this out of the fullness of their hearts. They wasted as God does in nature and history, in creation and salvation.

Do not suppress in yourselves or others the abundant heart, the waste of self-surrender, the Spirit who trespasses all reason. Do not greedily preserve your time and your strength for what is useful and reasonable. Keep yourselves open for the creative moment which may appear in the midst of what seemed to be waste.'

Wasting time may lead to a creative moment. On a hot day in Samaria Jesus wasted time, resting by a well while the disciples busily went to find some food. He struck up a conversation with a Samaritan woman. They got onto the subject of water, and worship, and she ended up going back to tell her whole village about him.

There are lots of ways to discover the foolishness of God, which is wiser than the wisdom of the world. Maybe you have already found one this Lent. I rather like this way - learning to waste time - deciding not to be busy - because although the world may say that procrastination is the thief of time, if stopping, really stopping, helps us be more in touch with ourselves, then we will be more in touch with God - and who knows what gifts we may then discover.