SELF CONTROL UNWRAPPED

Hi there! Here we are, back in lockdown! Welcome to the last in the series of services in which we unwrap the fruit of the Spirit, the qualities that grow in us when we decide to follow Jesus.

Now where are we up to today? Let’s say the fruit. Ready*….. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness*, *self-control*.”

It’s self-control.

So what is self-control? ...... It says in the dictionary it is the ability to control our emotions, our desires and our actions. It seems to me that to exercise the other fruits, we have to have self-control.

To be loving we sometimes need to control our dislike of someone. To be joyful we sometimes need to control our sadness. To be peaceful we sometimes need to control our aggression. To be patient we sometimes need to control our impatience. To be kind we sometimes need to control our unkindness. To be good we have to control our badness. To be faithful we have to control our unfaithfulness. To be gentle we have to control our roughness.

We have to be able to control our natural reactions.

Can you think of someone you know who has lots of self-control? ..... Who never seems to lose it? ..... And someone who hasn’t? …..

Can you think of an example of a time when you lost your self- control?…….

Or when you managed to use it? ......

Having just watched the first episode of the fourth series of “The Crown”, someone I thought of who has a lot of self-control is the Queen. She can never show how she feels, if she is cross, or bored or afraid. That must be quite difficult. She is amazing.

In our current situation, where life has changed quite a lot from how it used to be, it can be very difficult to have self-control. We get stressed more easily. People shout at each other more and are ruder, without really thinking what they are saying. I will give you an example of something that happened to me…..I had parked my car in a car park where the spaces were very narrow. That’s my excuse, anyway! I knew I would have to be careful when I opened the door, but my door handle just very lightly touched the door of the car next to me. The driver was sitting in the car. I immediately said sorry, but he opened the window and started shouting at me and abusing me. In the end I said, ”I am sorry from the bottom of my heart. Mea culpa.” Which seemed a bit over the top.

This is what it says in the Book of Proverbs about self- control.

*A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

That says it all.

Did Jesus have self-control?

Here is an example of how self-controlled Jesus was. This is from the Gospel of Luke when Jesus was being tempted by the devil in the desert.

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit, in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God tell this stone to become bread. Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”.*

Jesus was presumably ravenous, having eaten nothing for forty days. However, he was so full of the Holy Spirit that he had the self - control to refuse the devil’s suggestion that he should turn the stone into bread. By the way, why did Jesus not want to do that? ……I think it was because although Jesus on earth was fully man and fully God, he did not want to use his godly power for his own benefit. He was suffering as a man. For us.

How can we have self-control?.....If we feel we are losing it we should pray and ask God for help. And then, if we feel like shouting at someone, or hitting them, we should try to walk away until we have calmed down. Easier said than done!

PRAYERS

Dear Lord, Please help me to learn to be in control of how I behave. Please be with me all the time, by my side. Please help me to remember that you are there. Amen

Now let’s say the Lord’s Prayer together.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

And the Grace.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen