

Spots and Stars – Back to church Sunday 2017

On this occasion, with the children sharing with us I read the story about the Wemmicks written by Max Lucardo. The title is "You are Special". It's a simple story of Punchinello who is a small wooden character made by Eli the woodcarver who lives on the hill. All the Wemmicks are made by Eli.

They love nothing more than to give each other stars for being beautiful or clever or talented, or grey spots for being stupid, or clumsy or ugly. Punchinello has lots of spots.

He meets Lucia and.....well, I really think you should get the story for yourself. By all means pretend you are getting it for a child you know, but make sure you keep a copy at home.

You won't be the slightest bit surprised that I spend quite a lot of time thinking about the church. Whether it's back to church Sunday or not, the church is something close to my heart...it would be a little awkward if it wasn't wouldn't it?

For me the church can be really quite simple, although there are times we get ourselves in a knot.

This is the place where we discover that we really don't have to be concerned about stars or spots.

It doesn't matter if you are rich or famous or talented or beautiful – or indeed the opposite of all those things.

It doesn't matter what you have achieved or failed at, accumulated or lost, done or not done – at church...none of that matters.

At church we discover - at least I hope we are discovering...that God loves us profoundly simply for who we are, because we are His.

The astonishing hymn of praise read out from Philippians earlier reminds us of Jesus Christ – who although God, set all that aside to humble himself and die on a cross – it was for one reason only. The stars and spots we accumulate separate us from Father God and only the forgiveness Jesus offers through his death and resurrection can heal that relationship.

The church is the place where we discover other people who are discovering just what it is like to be loved by God and start to live life differently. Neither concerned about stars or bothered about spots. I'm the new caretaker – I'm here to look after the church.

No doubt I'll have to think about the building some of the time and this week I'm going to be thinking about the sound system and the platform!! Joyful!

And some of the time we'll have to think about practical things and services and structures and organisation and all that. Some of the time.

But most of my time I simply look to take care of the real church that is – you. I find as I do that there are a lot of people looking to take care of me. In fact taking care of each other – or to use the right biblical phrase – love one another, is what church is really all about.

It can be easy to be distracted – the habit of getting passionate about something not that important is a problem. Like sticking stars on others.

The habit of beating ourselves up can be a problem – I'm a rubbish Christian...that sort of thing.

The simple answer is to spend more time with our maker, which is what Max Lucardo was saying to us in his story about the Wemmicks. The more time we spend with the maker, the more we become who we are meant to be and allow others to be who they are meant to be. Spending time with the maker is a church kind of thing.

I have the feeling we are going to need more ways of spending time with our Maker and more ways of gathering as a church but whether it's in a formal way, or informal, BCP or stories about Wemmicks our focus will always be – Jesus Christ.

For a moment – let this picture lead your thoughts and prayers and then we'll sing....about Jesus.