



***Ultimate de-cluttering***  
**Reverend Judith Wigglesworth**  
**Epiphany 3, 22 January 2017**  
***Isaiah 9:1-4***  
***1 Corinthians 1:10-18***  
***Matthew 4:12-23***

De-cluttering is a bit of a buzz word and I've spent a lot of time in the last few weeks doing just that. The "Great De-clutter" was meant to happen when we moved house over two years ago, but somehow it didn't...so now in the midst of our three adult boys coming and going over the holidays we have been sorting through many boxes of stuff accumulated and saved over the last 30 years or so.

In the midst of all the de-cluttering, though, I did make some time for reading. One book I finished was "Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from the Camino", by Joyce Rupp. I started this book some time ago, but it got set aside when life got rather less than relaxed! The book describes the experience of two companions on pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago. Each chapter focused on a theme – a "life lesson" they learned along the way as they reflected on their time as pilgrims.

One chapter says this:

*"Walk in a relaxed manner. Much easier said than done. Tom and I were productive-oriented people, the kind you can count on to get things done....Tom was semiretired but still felt inundated with way too much to do. As for me, I continually faced stacks of unanswered mail, deadlines for retreat talks and writing, as well as numerous social commitments.....I'd get one thing finished in the office and ten more items popped up demanding my attention. I experienced this pressured*

*approach almost every day, like many other people I knew...I accepted pressing and hurrying as the normal way to live if one chose to be responsible, faithful and successful...*

*[However] this lifestyle does not work for a physically and spiritually healthy Camino [pilgrimage] nor does it work for a truly healthy life anywhere. It leads to anxiety, distress, and discontent. I discovered during my days as a pilgrim that I could not be at peace unless I walked in a relaxed manner both internally and externally."*

Somehow reading this book paralleled my Great De-clutter. As I immersed myself in this exercise I realised I was "walking in a relaxed manner" for the first time in a long time.

First, although this de-cluttering took a lot of energy – moving stuff, sorting stuff, making trips to second hand shops, and filling lots of rubbish bags – in another sense it was surrounded by a sense of gentleness. The diary was virtually empty and one day flowed into another. If I felt like going for a walk, I went for a walk. If I felt like sleeping in, I slept in. If I felt like curling up on the couch to watch a DVD or read a book, I did. And when I had the urge to continue the Great De-clutter there were plenty of boxes and bookshelves to choose from.

Second, in the midst of the de-cluttering, box by box, there was a sense of appreciation and reverence for the stories that each item told. Some were joyous, some were painful. But they all held a story and they all in some way held a sense of growth. Our family has done a lot of remembering and laughing these holidays as we re-discovered treasured items that I had squirreled away. And even if the boys are not convinced right now, one day they will be pleased that not all the treasure has been thrown out!

Third, although there was a clear external and physical dimension to the Great De-clutter, there's also been a sense of an internal emptying - de-cluttering on the inside. I hadn't realised how much the piles of boxes and stuff gathered over many years and tucked away (quite tidily!) somehow held their own energy which, subconsciously, felt a bit

like a burden. That burden began to dissipate as the number of boxes reduced: I appreciated Joyce Rupp's observations about needing to walk in a relaxed manner both externally and internally. Many years ago as a young mum when I began to step up very earnestly into several different roles in my faith community I remember a parishioner who was much older and wiser than me telling me not to take myself too seriously. I remembered his words recently as I noticed an increasing sense of peace as I focused on my de-cluttering task in a relaxed manner.

So how does any of this speak into our Gospel today as we near the end of our post-Christmas season of Epiphany?

It seems to me that today's Gospel encourages us into the ultimate de-clutter. As Jesus meets first Peter and Andrew, then James and John, he calls them to follow him. What did they do? They apparently left their nets and their families immediately, without hesitation. They said yes and followed Jesus.

To quote Joyce Rupp again:

*"Underneath all the layers [of life lessons on the Camino] was one major truth for me: I had to let go of trying to control and have everything go the way I wanted it to go. I needed to look at **how** I did my life, not so much **what** I did with my life."*

Peter, Andrew, James and John certainly made a radical decision to follow Jesus – it was a massive step to turn away from their livelihood. But I'm not sure that **what** they left behind, or even **what** they did afterwards, is the key issue. I think the key issue is that they accepted Jesus' invitation to **live life another way**. Following Jesus meant learning a whole new way of **how** to live their lives: how to serve, how to be humble, how to honour God, how to raise up others, and how to love and live as Jesus did. We know that sometimes they did well; sometimes not so well. But at this moment of commitment they were open to a whole new way of being.

Jesus' call to us today is the same. Regardless of **what** our livelihood may be, and no matter **what** activities we occupy ourselves with, we are called into a new way of being that's about **how** we live our lives. It is our internal de-cluttering that God is most concerned with.

So, do we have the courage to look inwards at **how** we live?

Can we make time, "in a relaxed manner", to untangle whatever clutter within us hinders our walk with Jesus Christ?

That's our challenge. That's the ultimate de-clutter.

Today's Collect sums it up beautifully:

*Living God, your Son Jesus Christ called the fishermen to follow him. Embolden us to lay aside everything that distracts us. Give us focus and resolve to follow you. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*

*Amen.*