

Who is Coming to Pick Us Up Later?

On Thursday morning, as I was preparing this sermon and reading a commentary on our passage of the second coming of Jesus, suddenly a little voice inside my head said, “Listen to what your grandsons are saying to their gran”.

I listened carefully and I overheard their remarks – “Who is coming to pick us up later from the school and nursery?” and that inner voice said to me, “That’s your sermon today, John”.

“Who is coming to pick us up?”

A simple question asked by my 6 and 4-year-old grandsons as they leave our house to go to nursery and school. “Gran, who is coming to pick us up after nursery and school?”.

Picture the scene – two young boys heading away in their gran's car. They are going to be away from their mum and dad, their home comforts, their gran and papa, and they are out there in the big world; yes, with kind people, but still strangers, watching them for the rest of the day, and a day can be a long time for wee boys.

Who is going to pick us up? That’s what was important to them, their young minds are already thinking through the bigger issues, of what the day holds in store for them, when Gran is no longer with them.

So, what has this to do with our sermon this morning?

I believe that in our passage, Jesus is posing the question to his disciples, “Who will come and pick you up after I have gone?”

The context to our Gospel reading is important.

This event comes near the end of Jesus' life; in fact for Mark, it is the final event before Jesus begins his Passion Journey to the Cross.

Firstly, he sets the world in a bleak context; if we had read the whole chapter today, you would have heard him speak about famines, natural disasters, cosmic disruption, wars, persecution of his followers, and Jesus describes the world and its tragic direction that it will take. He says those days will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning when God created the world until now.

Jesus is a realist, he doesn't cover his words in sugar coating, rather he lays the facts before them. There will be troubled times, people will be the worst possible image of themselves. Betrayal, rebellion and hatred.

Nothing changes too much, and these words could be applied to our world situation today.

But I believe Jesus is explaining to them that, despite the troubles and the grief, there is hope, for a day is coming when the Son of Man will return, and He is coming to pick up his people. They will be gathered from the four corners of Earth and Heaven and they will be saved.

Jesus invites them to consider the fig tree. The leaves in the fig tree bud for considerable time before the fruit appears. The leaves tell us that summer is near. So they are to watch and be ready.

I wonder if about 2 p.m. in the afternoon, Jack and Harry begin to think about their gran coming to pick them up? Thinking about their snack or home comforts.

I'm not sure how their wee minds work, but what I do know is that they are reassured that their gran will be at the nursery door to pick them up. She has given them her promise, that she will come at the end of their nursery and school day; despite everything that might happen, she will be there waiting for them at the doors to take him home.

Isn't that a wonderful thought, that the Prince of Peace, the Son of God, assures us and promises us, that he will return to this world, and he will be there to pick his people up. Like a shepherd he gathers them to himself.

Harry and Jack's little question to their gran was simple but yet profound, "Who will pick us up?" a question that we will all have at some point in our lives; at the end of the day, when this short life is over, who is going to pick you up?

Thanks be to God, it is no one less than His compassionate Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ – Now that is something worth looking forward to – Advent is a season of looking forward – looking forward to Christmas Day, but it is also a time to look forward and beyond Christmas Day to the Second Coming of Jesus, who is coming to pick us up, and take us home; or if he calls us home before he comes, we can be assured, that he will be at the gates of Heaven ready and waiting to pick us up.

“Do not be afraid”, said Jesus, “There are many rooms in my Father's house, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you and I will come back again to take you to be with me”.

Harry and Jack just needed to know that on a cold Thursday morning, as they headed off to nursery and school, Gran was coming to pick them up and suddenly their little world seemed to be in order.

What about us? Who is going to pick us up?

Can you this morning take these simple thoughts, “Lord, who is coming to pick me up?” And listen to his reply from John's Gospel. “When I go away, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you will be also.”

Amen