

Live Lent

Sheet 4

Have you noticed how the parables and words of Jesus are either based on agriculture or fishing? Obviously it's all about relevance. The people he was addressing were mainly farmers, herders and fishermen whose horizons did not stretch far. Had he talked about the things we know today they would have been bemused. There is always the difficulty of relevance in how we speak to each other. When I was a teacher one of the exercises I most enjoyed was looking at the language used in different newspapers covering the same story. I love language and the nuances in it – how one word can change the meaning completely.

I also love the musicality of the spoken word. Just as in music the speaking voice will have ups and downs, accents and differences in volume and pitch. This is called inflection. Listen to different speakers and how their voices can go up or down. One thing that has come into our spoken language is the way that young people will end their sentences with what is called an ascending inflection. The way things are said can also change their meaning. An example is the simple quote, 'Who is Sylvia? What is she?' Try saying it in different ways – same words but different meanings.

The action for this week in Live Lent was to think and record communication. How do you speak to people? Do you always use the same language or do you adapt what you say to each person so that they can understand what you are saying? I know that as a midwife I very often had to go back to a patient to explain what the obstetrician had said and on one memorable occasion told a consultant off because of the language he had used to a mother who was at risk of having an early labour. Even as a student I remember being in a consultation with a doctor who was trying to tell a husband that his wife would not last the day. In the end I simply said to the man that what the doctor was saying was that his wife would die that day. He then understood.

So what has all of this to do with our study? I want you to try to retell one of the stories of Jesus for a modern day crowd. Would you talk about sheep and goats? If not, what would you say?

I would also like to remind you that communication is in fact a two way street. Unless we listen as well as talk we cannot communicate. When we pray we must listen too; that way we can hear what our Lord is saying.

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