

“BUSY HANDS”

Exodus 35:25-29, Mark 1:40-42 [MW18-25]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 19 August 2018

“Reflection”

Yesterday we had the “Busy Hands” Craft Display

- the Old Testament reading we've just heard records how skillful women spun with their ... *hands* ... and made brilliantly coloured yarns and linen
- it also mentions how women used their skill to spin goats' hair that's pretty amazing and it seems to me that it would sure take some skill to make goats' hair into anything useful!

Just like those women from way back then

- some local women, also with great skill displayed the results of exercising their skills the work of their hands, using their time and talent
- the Craft Display was an opportunity to share that and in doing so give thanks to God for the gifts of talent, creativity and skill
- for the teaching and encouragement they get when they meet and for the sharing in community, which we were blessed to be part of
- the reality is that using the gifts God gives us is sharing the blessing

In the reading we heard from Exodus

- people were giving the results of their time, effort and skill to appropriately decorate the place where God was to be worshipped
- and perhaps that recalls the saying:
*the talents and skills we have are God's gift to us
what we do with those talents and skills is our gift to God*
- today we give thanks for the talents and skills and creativity of those who took part in the Craft Display
- we also give thanks for hands, for busy hands, for the work of hands because without that, there would be nothing to display!

We give thanks for the “gift” of hands, which is behind everything we celebrate today

- God has given us an amazing and miraculous gift in creating 'human beings' as we are
- and in particular in how we have and are able to use our hands ...

I invite you to take a moment and have a good look at your hands

- wiggle your fingers and thumbs and move your hand around isn't that just amazing ... what a great design ...
- with all our modern technology, could we, by ourselves come up with such a useful piece of equipment as the hand?

Hands are great gifts aren't they ...

- but each gift from God carries with it a responsibility to use it well think of all the things you can do with your hands just on their own, with out any other tools or equipment ...
 - what are some good things we can do with just our hands???
- (space for responses)
- wave, offer friendship, help up, comfort, rub tired muscles, pray, cheer, hitch a ride

But, but ... hands can also push away, stop, make a fist, give a thumbs down
- hide, pull, poke ...

Yes, hands are indeed gifts from God
- sometimes they are used to help and heal
sometimes they are used to hurt and harm

We are made in the image of God
- what we do with our hands is our offering to the Lord God
who gave us the gift of hands

I invite you to look at your hands again
- and call to mind one thing you are able to do with your hands
that you are particularly thankful for and give thanks to God
- let's take a moment or two to do that, then I'll pray

[space to reflect]

Gracious God,
we give thanks for the Busy Hands Craft Display
and for all who were part of it;
we thank you for the talent and skill and creativity shown
the gift and work of hands.
We give you thanks for the gift of our hands,
and for all the good things we are able to do with them.
As you have blessed us with hands,
may they be busy hands,
sharing and celebrating your blessing of life.
Amen.

“Sermon”

Our hands are able to do many things
- each one of us has different talents, skills, abilities
it is up to us to use what God gives us
- God has given us hands, God has given us ability
and God has given us a work to do

I play the guitar, Lindsay – you also play the guitar
- there may be other guitarists, other players of stringed instruments
who might especially appreciate this story ...

In a large city it was advertised that an accomplished classical guitarist would play a \$250,000 guitar. The theatre was packed. Many came as much to see the fine guitar as to hear the music. The guitarist came on stage. He played the guitar. The people listened and were enraptured. Suddenly the guitarist threw down the guitar and smashed it, stomped on it, destroyed it ... there was a shocked, horrified, unbelieving silence. Had the guitarist lost his mind? Why did he do that? What would make him do such a terrible thing? Then the manager came out and addressed the stunned crowd. “Friends, the guitarist was not playing the \$250,000 guitar yet. The instrument you heard played was bought second hand for \$65. He will now play the \$250,000 guitar.” And he did. And very few people could tell the difference. The guitarist simply wanted to show that it is the guitarist and not the guitar that makes the music.

It is not our tools or instruments that are most important
- but our hands and what we do with them
when we allow God to use our hands what a difference
what a difference

In this morning's Gospel reading Jesus makes a huge difference in one person's life
- and he does it how ... ?
by placing his *hand* on the person
Jesus reaches out and touches the man with his hand
- the man had leprosy, a dreaded and feared disease
that excluded him from family and friends
from life in a community
- a debilitating illness that prevented him from working
from doing or taking part in things that you and I just take for granted

People would not even look at a person suffering in this way
- let alone talk to them
certainly not touch them and no way be touched by them
- but Jesus reaches out his hand
by placing his hand on that man Jesus bestows a priceless gift
- for a start the man is made whole, a person
no longer will people turn away when they see him
- he can work, support himself, hold hands, hold children, shake hands
all sorts of possibilities have been opened up

Jesus' hands can bring healing and hope and new life
- through our hands we can let others know
about all that God gives through his Son Jesus Christ
- think of those to whom you can reach out
this week, with a touch of your hands
you can bring Christ's hope, cheer and comfort

Remember the touch of God's hand to us and through us
- remember the the touch of God's hand in Jesus
in our fellowship with each other
in the good news we have to share

I will conclude with a poem – an “oldie but a goodie” - that I think says it all:

The Master's Hand

*Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To spend much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.*

*'What am I bidden for this?' he cried.
'Who'll start the bidding for me?
A dollar – one dollar: then two – only two:
Two dollars are bidden; say three.*

*'Three dollars once: three dollars twice:
Going for three!' But lo!
From the back of the crowd a grey-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow.*

*Then, wiping the dust from the old violin
And tight'ning the loosened strings,
He played a melody passing sweet,
The kind that haunts and clings.*

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was soft and low,
Said, 'Now what is bid for the old violin?'
And he held it up with the bow.*

*'A thousand dollars: who'll make it two?
Two — two thousand: say three.
Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
Three thousand — gone!' said he.*

*The people cheered, but some exclaimed,
'We do not quite understand
What changed its worth:' and the answer came,
'Twas the touch of a Master's hand.'*

*And many a man with soul out of tune,
And battered and scarred by sin,
Is auctioned cheap by the thoughtless crowd,
Just like the old violin.*

*But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul, and the change that is wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.*

*O Master! I am the tuneless one:
Lay, lay Thy hand on me,
Transform me now, put a song in my heart
Of melody, Lord, to Thee.*

[Pause]

May we go out and tell others
- so that together our hands and their hands
may become Heavenly Hands for our Lord