

WEEKLY SERMON

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Have a word with myself

When she was younger, one of my goddaughters, catching herself mid-tantrum, would suddenly stop and announce to anyone who was listening, 'I think I need to go and have a word with myself'. I always found myself hugely impressed at the level of self-awareness that she was capable of demonstrating at such a young age, and her ability to shake herself out of her mood and to re-focus on the good and fun things going on around her.

Reading through the Psalms it strikes me that the Psalmist often demonstrates that same ability.

I love the way that Asaph captures it in Psalm 77 – he begins by saying he's crying aloud to God and his thoughts take him to a desperate place: "Has God's steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?". You can feel his anguish pouring out through his questions, but then he stops and changes his tone, "Then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord, yes, I will remember your wonders of old"

It's as if he stops and has a word with himself, talking to himself about all that God has done previously so that he can trust him for all that's ahead, even when the circumstances cause him to ask difficult questions.

Or, going back to Psalm 73, Asaph again finds himself churching over things that are wrong, particularly with the way in which those that are wicked seem to be doing so well whilst he, living a godly life, is not knowing their success. He's just got himself to the place of thinking that he's lived his life in vain, when he stops, has a word with himself and takes himself to the sanctuary where once more perspective is restored as he remembers who God is and sees the bigger picture of eternity. He never denies the presence of suffering but in the midst of that fixes his eyes on God.

The Psalmist (and my goddaughter!) is teaching me the importance of hearing the words that I speak to myself, and the need to stop and have a different word – one that speaks of the love and truth of God, and restores perspective and brings hope.

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