



Servington Lock

November 2019

I called in at an unfamiliar Tesco Superstore the other evening. It was wet and dark and I was tired and cold but knew I had so much to do the following day it would save time shopping then. I didn't realise that at this store you needed a £1 coin or a trolley token to use a trolley. Rooting round in my purse, I had neither. It was busy and I had had to park quite a distance away...did I mention that I was tired and cold?and by then cross! I had £1 in smaller change and asked a lady who was loading shopping into her car if I could give her this for her trolley (to bypass the system!) She turned and smiled at me - honestly her smile lit up her face - "just take the trolley" she said - "I used my trolley token - but have it". Well that threw me!!! Her kindness was so genuine and warm but receiving it was hard. But it also gave me a little buzz. Pondering this later it struck how much easier it is to do stuff for others, but being the receiver, unexpectedly, was hard. I wanted to protest initially - I could go in the store and ask at the service desk - but instinctively I knew that this wasn't the right way to treat this kind stranger.

Serving is a 2 way act - there is the giver and the receiver and we have to make a habit of doing and being both. Perhaps you thought visiting Servington Lock meant hearing how much more you needed to do stuff for other people?! Maybe you do - I don't know. Yes, Jesus does want his followers to look out for those who need a helping hand - in both small gestures and bigger ones. The Message version of the Bible says, 'the Word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood.' Jesus is our model of behaviour. He got alongside people. He paid attention to and noticed people and got his hands dirty helping them. So, yes, it is about doing stuff. My eldest daughter finds motherhood really hard and as a result she has been known to spontaneously buy a bunch of flowers and give them to a struggling mum whose child is screaming whilst sitting in a super market trolley. She tells them, "Hang in there, you are doing a great job." That is a way she serves because she identifies with them. But what if the mum refused them? It'd be a kick in the teeth for my daughter! One of the Messy Church mums wants us to donate gift-wrapped new socks. She and her family will take them up to London the Sunday before Christmas and give them out. She feels those living on the streets should have something to unwrap...I love that idea. But perhaps it is just remembering to say thank you, being intentionally friendly to those who serve you at the supermarket or putting dustbins the right way round for the bin men to collect? Maybe it is being a gracious driver, letting people through and thanking them when they do likewise?

Perhaps it is bigger things? Things that for us as disciples, should be a hallmark of our discipleship.

Remember though, in serving I am not trying to change the one I serve - any change in them, if needed, is incidental. If anything they may change me. As the woman who donated her token (along with trolley) changed something in me.

So although this is another challenging Holy Habit, it is a 'win win' .

Liz