

# **TWO WAYS OF DOING NOTHING!**

July 2026

I have entitled our thoughts this morning *"Two ways of doing nothing"*

When you hear that title, you are maybe thinking of the Bing Crosby song.

*We're busy doin' nothin'  
Workin' the whole day through  
Tryin' to find lots of things not to do  
We're busy goin' nowhere  
Isn't it just a crime  
We'd like to be unhappy, but  
We never do have the time*

Hopefully we might get a little further than that this morning.

I suppose that I should really also add a sub-title to this *"Two ways of doing nothing; and one way of doing something"* and in a way this sub-title is perhaps the most important part of the sermon – but more on this later!

When we look around the world today it would be easy to become depressed. So much tragedy, so much suffering, so much needless pain. I know the media revel in the bad news, and it's no news whatsoever when someone does a kind and selfless act. Occasionally we read about an act of heroism and even self-sacrifice but these reports are few and far between. More often than not our news reports focus on the bleak, the sensational, the painful and the ugly. And there is good reason for this I suppose for there is just so much of it around us each and every day.

I suppose it was much the same in the time of Jesus. Life was hard and life was cheap. Life was continually under the control of the occupying Roman Empire and every day there were taxes and burdens and impositions, hunger, sickness, the promise of a short life for most and strings of crosses lining the roadways executing those who would dare to rebel and buck the system.

How do we react when faced with all this suffering? I would suggest that one way in which people cope with this today is to shut it out of their minds altogether. One could call this the Emu Approach where we put our heads in the sand and do nothing. There are too many people who are seemingly unmoved by all these reports, and continue to pursue a selfish lifestyle and pay no attention at all to all the calls for support from the many charities struggling to meet the needs of the world. They are the hedonists whose sole regard in life is the pursuit of pleasure. These are the ones who worship the gods of money, prestige, glamour, selfishness and pleasure.

So this is one way to do nothing; turn a blind eye to it all look after number one at all costs, and disregard anything that might threaten your pursuit of happiness in any way.

But there is another way of doing nothing – and paradoxically this is just the opposite, at the other end of the spectrum. What I mean is that you feel so burdened by all the need and suffering around you, so distressed that you become effectively paralysed. You say things such as

- *What can I do it would be only a drop in the ocean?*
- *There will still be poverty and sickness in the world no matter what I do!*
- *I don't even know where to start!*
- *I don't have the physical strength nor mental fortitude to cope with all this!*
- *What can little I achieve when faced with the enormity of the task?*

And you end up having what is called compassion fatigue, the well is dry and you feel you have no more to give – so you do nothing!

This a very understandable attitude and comes from being too sensitive, too aware.

Neither of these outlooks is to be recommended as you can imagine. So what is the third way in which we continue to reach out and do things that are real, compassionate and tangible, without collapsing in a heap?

Maybe we should begin in our search for some balance by realising that, Jesus himself must have been tired and drained with all the needs he was meeting. We know he did get frustrated and dispirited. That is why he would often go into retreat, just to be in the presence of his Father. Up a mountain, into the wilderness just so that he could recharge his batteries – to top up his spiritual and maybe his physical energy.

Jesus did not help or heal everyone in his society. Not all the poor, nor all the crippled nor the lepers nor raise everyone from the dead!

Jesus himself acknowledged this .Was it not he who said

*“The poor you will always have with you”?*

And in our reading from Luke Jesus reminds us that Elijah didn't feed everyone starving in the drought and Elisha did not heal everyone with leprosy. Quoting again from Luke, we read

*“I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarepath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed – only Naaman the Syrian.*

So the first thing is to realise that you cannot take on the whole world and do it all. God is in charge and we have to leave it to him in the long run. But, we certainly can be his channels in the limited world where we are. And even though it may seem very limited, we can certainly make a difference that can certainly snowball into something more far-reaching than we first imagined.

*Tired from a full day's work, Rosa Parks boarded a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955 in Alabama. When she refused to obey the driver's order to give up her seat in the "colored" section for a white person, she was arrested for civil disobedience. Parks' act of defiance, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott that followed, are recognized as pivotal moments in the Civil Rights Movement.*

We should also realise is that, like Jesus, we need to spend time with God to recharge our batteries and renew our energies. This was certainly the case for all the great saints who moved mountains and changed the world. John Wesley, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, William Wilberforce, Nelson Mandela and so many more. They were able to draw on the limitless resource of God's strength, maturity and wisdom, and in spite of their human weaknesses they made such a difference.

Finally, we need to realise is that we are certainly not alone. There is a band of modern day saints who are daily performing miracles of transformation, courage, salvation and healing. There are success stories, and though not many of these will reach the front pages of the newspapers you can find them in the reports of the many charities working tirelessly. Here's one such success story from World Vision.

*Jacqueline became the sole provider for her family after her husband, a soldier, was killed. But life got even worse for the widowed mother of five from Rwanda when she lost her teaching job.*

*She needed a way to become the breadwinner for her children. She had hopes and dreams for them that could not be realized without income.*

*"That's when we heard about [World Vision] giving small loans," she says.*

*With a loan and business training, Jacqueline opened a restaurant along with two other widows. It quickly became the most popular eatery in town.*

*Jacqueline is thankful that she can provide for her family.*

*"Because of the loan, my children have food to eat," she says. "They have clothes. They go to school. Our community is really happy."*

Whatever, you have the time, energy and generosity to do means that you too are a member of God's band of modern day saints. You may think it limited, and so it might be, but nevertheless you can make a difference. You can be God's channel in so many ways!

As it says in the Sunday School Song

*Jesus bids us shine with a clear pure light,*

*Like a little candle burning in the night.*

*In this world of darkness, we too must shine,*

*You in your small corner, and I in mine.*

Yes there are two ways of doing nothing when confronted with the world's pain. But there is a third way that can make such a difference. This is the way of Christ, the way of our Lord.

Amen