

26th March 2020

Sitting

“My dear Isa, I now sit down on my bottom to answer all your kind and beloved letters which you was so good as to write to me.”

Marjory Fleming, Journals, Letters and Verses

My granny lived a distance away from her church, so she took a bus. But the timings made it awkward. Worship was at 11am. One bus got her to church at 10.55, an earlier one at 9.55. But she didn't want to be late. So, she got the early bus, and was in church before 10 – a whole hour early!

When I was a parish minister, Mrs Preston, did the same. She walked to church, so why she came so early I never found out. But every Sunday she would be sitting in her place, while lots of things went on around her. I was there early too, for there was always plenty to do before worship. So I'd rush past her and say 'Good morning'. I'd wiz by and mutter, 'Nice day'. Sometimes I would just nod. Often I would say nothing, as I dashed about doing this and that. One morning as I was passing her for the umpteenth time, Mrs Preston said, 'Excuse me, minister, do you have a minute?' I skidded to a halt. 'Come and sit here,' she said, patting the seat beside her. Puzzled, I sat down and waited. She was silent for ages. 'Well,' I said, trying hard not to sound irritated, 'what can I do for you, Mrs Preston?' She turned to me, took my hand and said, 'Nothing at all, minister. I just wanted to see if you could sit down ...'

In this time of 'lock-down', many of us will still be busy: if not in body, then in mind; if not in activity, then in anxiety; if not in practicalities, then in planning and preparation. But the God who is Mrs Preston beckons us over, takes us by the hand and whispers: 'I just wanted to see if you could sit down. And, for me, that will be enough.'

A prayer for today

My dear God, here I am. And for a moment, I now sit down on my bottom to answer all your kind and beloved love which you was so good as to show to me. Amen

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