

ON YOUR MARKS – SUNDAY SERVICE

JESUS – THE HERO OF THE STORY

Who is your hero? Why? *Mo Farah, Tiger Woods and Spiderman were amongst the answers we got!*

What makes a hero? A hero can do something special, can do special things very well; can inspire you; a hero is usually someone famous or brave or strong.

This week, the children were all champions in a way because they did everything we asked and did it very well. But the centre of the story of the week was Jesus; we have been telling his story on *The Miracle Maker* DVD which told us lots about Jesus, some of the things He did, the people He helped, the stories He told; the fact that it wasn't always easy for Him, that He suffered and died and then rose again at the end. Here's one of these stories: **Mark 2:1-12**

A man was brought to Jesus; he couldn't get there on his own because he couldn't walk. His four friends carried him on a stretcher. When they got to the house, it was so full that they couldn't get in and the man maybe suggested going home and coming back another day. But his friends were not to be put off; they climbed onto the roof and started digging a hole in the roof to let their friend down inside the room. Jesus welcomed him and said two things to him:

First of all, He said "*Your sins are forgiven*" and everyone in the room was surprised because only God could do that and some of them thought Jesus was mad; later they discovered that He was God's Son.

Secondly, Jesus said "*Take your mat and go home*" – the man who could never walk, all of a sudden was able to walk, rolled up his mat and ran out of house jumping and singing, so happy because Jesus had healed him.

Jesus is the hero of the story: He could do these fantastic things; people thought He was wonderful, they were amazed. They were inspired to believe Him and follow Him and love Him. Some didn't; they thought He was mad and they killed Him; but He rose from being dead and still lives in heaven and still inspires people to believe Him and follow Him as Saviour and Lord.

CREATING HEROS

What makes Usain Bolt a hero? *Faster, higher, stronger* – these are the Olympic ideals! So people like Bolt and all others are trying to run faster than anyone has ever done before or jump higher or be stronger than everyone else, fight harder and better. They are all trying to win a gold medal and they overjoyed when they do that; some are distraught when they don't. Over the last two weeks some have said that those who come second lost because they "only" won silver – how ridiculous! Andrew Osagie – one of the British runners in the 800m and he got to the final on Thursday; he didn't win the race and in fact he came in last, 8th out of eight. But at the end of the race, he had a great big smile on his face: he had run faster than he'd ever run before; the person who won the race broke the world record and Andrew Osagie was just delighted to be there and take part in that fantastic race. It is not all about winning!

Jesus was trying to make His friends into a team who would love and care for each other, who would learn to work together, and be the team who would follow Jesus even after He was gone. From the very beginning He had cared for them, and made them all

feel as if they belonged to Him and taught them what faith and love meant. He had been teaching them about what is important. But they still had a lot to learn: they were fighting over who was the greatest; they had been arguing on the road about which of them was the most important in God's kingdom; perhaps they all wanted to be the person at the top! But Jesus wanted them to see that there was something more important than being the fastest, highest, and strongest. He had a habit of turning things upside down. So He did two things:

1. Be the first – be a servant: Jesus had habit of turning things upside down and that's what he does here. "You want to be the greatest, be a servant!" He says. In life, He says, the greatest is not the person who is the strongest or the fastest, but the one who serves someone else. The disciples thought that one of them ought to be top, the leader, the best, the one who could tell others what to do, but Jesus turns all of that upside down and says that they should think about how to serve one another, how to love and care for one another, how to look after one another. Not only did He say that, but Jesus did it. The hero of the story, the Son of God, with His great power and glory, Peter and others "*Eyewitnesses of His majesty*", but what did He do? He gave His life for other people as a servant; the gospel is all about Jesus who died on a cross to be the Saviour of the world, to do us good; the servant who was thinking only about us. Be like Jesus, serve!

2. He welcomed a little child: children in Jesus' time were not important people; nobody listened to them, nobody really cared for them; they were last on the list! Jesus took a little child in His arms and said "*Welcome this little child and when you do that, you welcome me and God.*" Not that children are God, but Jesus challenges His friends to care about people whom others think don't count, or don't matter. There is something important here for our world to see: we need to value our children. There has been a lot said during the Olympics about "*Inspire a generation*" and the legacy! I want to inspire a new generation to believe in Jesus; the legacy – to create a new generation of people who are friends of Jesus; we do that by welcoming little children, showing them Jesus by the kind of people we are and telling them stories of Jesus.

Jesus is creating heroes – we can be these heroes: serve and welcome!