

A photograph of a stone church building with a large arched window and a cross on the roof. White blossoms are visible on the right side of the image.

Weekly Newsletter: 25 November 2025

Reflection: "See that you tell no one" (Matt. 8:4) - Some Thoughts on Obscurity

By Joe Barnard

One of the strange features of the gospels is the way in which Jesus tells people to keep quiet after he helps them and not to tell others about his miraculous deeds. Matthew 8 is case in point. After Jesus cleanses the leper, he says, "See that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded". *See that you tell no one*. This is such a strange approach to building a kingdom or spreading a message. Any publicist or marketing firm would tell Jesus to do the opposite. If you want to spread your influence, get the report out about your powers. The more people that are amazed, the more people that will follow.

But this is not Jesus' approach. He seeks obscurity. He prefers to work in silence and off the stage than before a crowd and under a spotlight.

Now, there are plenty of theories for why Jesus operated the way He did. I'm not interested in rehearsing them here or selecting one as most plausible. I want rather for us to recognise that Jesus' character hasn't changed over the last two thousand years. We ought to expect that in most cases the preferences and mannerisms of Jesus have stayed the same over time. If we want to discern what Jesus is doing now, there is no better place to look than the gospels. After all, the King seated at the right hand of glory is the same Jesus that long ago walked the dirt paths of Capernaum.

With this in mind, I think there is something we should learn from Jesus' predilection for obscurity. It's this: don't expect Jesus to publicise his most amazing works. Jesus is not an influencer, and He's not a celebrity. He has no interest in gathering a mere "following". Jesus is after disciples, and growing disciples is a much more personal and involved work than is building a following.

This makes me think about the so-called "Quiet Revival". I think my favourite aspect of this movement is the word "quiet". I've always been a bit uncomfortable with some of the revivalism of the 19th and 20th centuries. Much of it happened in the wake of growing technology and media, which is to say in the wake of a lot of headlines and publicity. This strikes me as against the grain of Jesus' methods. The Saviour I see in the gospels is one that likes to work with muffled feet in places where journalists aren't working. This is why I find the word "quiet" so interesting. Nothing seems more likely than that, if Jesus wanted to do something unusual, he would do it quietly and in a way that is difficult for pundits to trace and reporters to follow.

Something else to reflect on from Jesus' subtlety: One cause of religious doubt is the apparent discrepancy between the miracles of the gospels and the mundaneness of modern life. It's not hard to begin to feel uncomfortable about the supernatural elements of the gospels when we live in a world that looks and feels as if it is immune to supernatural interference. We may wonder why we don't read more headlines like those coming out of Galilee in Jesus' time: "One Less Leper!" or "Another Demon Bites the Dust!"

When such doubts emerge we need to remember Jesus' words "*see that you tell no one*". Jesus' preferred method is always to do his most amazing work with the least possible fanfare. Personally, I have no doubts that Jesus is still in the business of healing diseases and exorcising demons. And I'm not bothered in the least if none of the titillating reports of such deeds reaches my newsfeed. The Jesus I know has never been interested in the business of self-publicity. He does his work like a carpenter- behind the scenes and without notice. He never compromises his humility to advance his mission.

There is one more thing worth saying in reference to these ideas. If Jesus sought obscurity, should we not do the same? We live in a world that viciously competes for attention and publicity. Such interests are not spiritual. They smell more of vain-glory and envy than of faith and love. Jesus was serious when he said, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing". Far better is one smile of the Heavenly Father than one million views on YouTube or one thousand likes on social media.

Do we want to be like Jesus? Then let virtue be its own reward. Let's do the task in front of us hoping that, if all goes well, no one will notice. If this is our attitude, we'll be worthy apprentices of the great joiner of Nazareth.

Special Congregational Meeting

There will be special congregational meeting on **Wednesday 3rd December at 7pm** in the church building (a live stream will also be available).

Joe writes 'On that evening we will be thinking about what it means to align our mission and our finance, possible new additions to the staff, and unveiling a new logo that will be part of a new digital identity. My hope is that the outcomes from the meeting will be unity, excitement, and a shared sense of responsibility. Put the date on your calendar; you don't want to miss 3rd December, 7pm.'

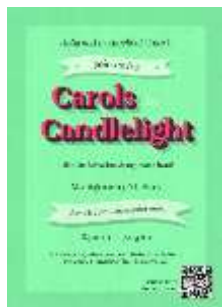
Mary McIntyre

The Thanksgiving Service for Mary's life will take place on **Thursday 27 November** at 11.30am in Holyrood followed by light refreshments. Everyone is warmly welcome.

Warm Space

Warm Space is restarting on **Monday (1 December)** from 12 noon until 3pm and will run for three consecutive Mondays. Come along, bring a friend and enjoy the warm space!

Carols by Candlelight – Tuesday 16 December



Flyers are now available in the church foyer for **Carols by Candlelight on Tuesday 16 December** from 6.30pm – 7.15pm.

We're looking forward to having the Salvation Army Brass Band lead us in some carols over the in park (weather permitting!) followed by hot drinks and mince pies in the church. There will also be kids' activities in the church and it is a great event to invite friends along to.

A Note from Lorna Ferguson

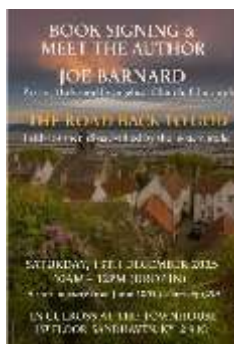
Lorna is one of the missionaries we support in Japan and here's a note from her –

"I wanted to write a fuller thank you for the generous gift I received from Kathleen and Maureen's legacies. Nearly 10 years ago, we bought a little car just as David became ill. It has served me faithfully over all that time but unfortunately wasn't suitable for the winter roads in the north of Japan. Here I need a 4WD car with winter tyres. This gift came through at just the right time, and I was able to get a replacement car (pictured!) just before the snow starts to fall. I was then able to give my previous car to Alistair who needs one as he starts work, but as a student had no money to buy one! So in that sense this kind gift has been a double blessing to both to me and to Alistair. I was also able to give a gift from it to help with the building fund at Hiragishi Izumi Church which we helped start in 2009. Through generous gifts (including one from a previous Holyrood Christmas appeal) the church has been able to buy land and now they are saving up to put a building on it. Kathleen visited us in Hiragishi many years ago and, along with Moira Sinclair, helped at one of our Easter festivals, so this seemed an appropriate gift in Kathleen's memory.



I am so grateful for the kindness and generosity of everyone at Holyrood. May the Lord bless each one of you too."

The Road Back to God – Book Event



Lora Graham is hosting a book launch for Joe's new book 'The Road Back to God - Faith for Men Dissatisfied by the Modern World ' at her shop in Culross (The Townhouse, First floor, Sandhaven, KY12 8JG) on Saturday 13 December from 10am to 12 noon. Everyone is warmly invited!

Feel free to pop in during the morning and Joe will be doing a short message at 10.15am followed by a Q&A.

Christmas Appeal 2025

After receiving suggestions from the church family, the elders have chosen the following projects for the Christmas Appeal this year:

- Women's Workers for Tranent Community Church - to support a shortfall in funding for its two women's workers, Jen and Morag.
- Cross Training Ministries – to invest in inspiring and training men in every corner of Scotland.
- Craig Anderson and the Church Plant in Galashiels – to help with the purchase of their new building and be an encouragement to Craig and his core team.
- East of Scotland Gospel Partnership - this partnership is in a relaunching phase and would greatly benefit from having some funds to develop its work.

Tranent Community Church and Cross Training Ministries will each receive 40% of the total raised with Craig Anderson and the East of Scotland Gospel Partnership each receiving 10%.

The Christmas Appeal will be open throughout December and as usual people can transfer money directly into the church bank account <https://holyroodevangelical.org/giving/> or place donations into the offering box marked Christmas Appeal. Thank you!

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Home Groups. Contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org for more details
- Thursday: Mary McIntyre's Thanksgiving Service at 11.30am followed by light refreshments
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Christmas Choir Practice after the morning service
 - Evening Service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space 12 noon to 3pm



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