

Robert Fulghum used to live next to a primary school in Seattle. There was a relatively high fence between his section and the school. On the other side was the place where parents dropped their kids off. One warm morning he was out in the garden and heard a car stop. The driver's door was opened and slammed shut. The driver came round to the other side, opened the door and her voice came blasting over the fence.

BILLY, WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU DONE?

Fulghum didn't know what Billy had done – he could've spilled his drink, he could've dropped his lunch box all over the car, he could've vomited his breakfast all over himself and taken off the offending clothes, or he could've used a permanent marker and drawn with it all over the back of the seat and he could have done all five.

WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU DONE?

Fulghum regards this as one of the great mother questions, the second is: **WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?**

The third is: **WHAT WILL YOU THINK OF NEXT?**

Past, present, future.... And children know there's no reasonable answer to such questions – children mutter, sniffle or cry. Most of the time a kid doesn't think about what he or she's doing and why – it's the privilege of being a child.

As I read Fulghum's account of his experience I concluded that these aren't just mother questions, these are the great life questions although from a Jesus perspective I'd ask them slightly differently.

And it seemed appropriate at the first occasion I had to speak to this community, this year to ask those questions of myself and all of us.

1. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

How have you lived your days so far? Has it been mostly about you? Has it been a balanced life – loving God, loving people; self-care and service to others? I think of two New Testament responses;

Jesus: **I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. (John 17:4)**

Paul: **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)**

Have you done the work Jesus called you to do? Not just for older people. There is a work for Jesus no-one but you can do (Billy Campbell - 1968). If you don't do it, it won't get done; challenging and sobering. As I come to the end of my time in formal Christian service that's a question I've been asking, and at this stage the response is mixed.

2. WHAT IN THE NAME OF JESUS ARE YOU DOING?

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

It's a good litmus test isn't it? Can I do what I'm doing in the name of Jesus? That's one question; the other is well what am I doing in Jesus' name. Am I doing the good works prepared for me to do?

It seems we've reached one of those turning points when we need to ask that question, what in the name of Jesus am I doing in order to fulfil my commitment to be his disciple?

3. WHATEVER WILL YOU DO NEXT?

While that may be one of the mother questions, I'd rather reframe it - to what do you feel called? Retreat at Teschemakers – that question kept coming up. What's next for you in your journey with Jesus?

What have you done?

What are you doing?

To what do you feel called

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

Actually the future spiritual health of this community depends on your answer to that one.

So Fulghum thought about all this in response to the women crying out, 'Billy, what have you done?', he remembered his mother's questions from his childhood and he's brave enough to say her tone of contempt in asking those questions raised blisters on his soul.

Armed with his reflections and his memories he decided to hurry round the fence to bless and encourage Billy's mother. Billy was gone; the mother was sitting in the car weeping and beating both hands on the steering wheel, while muttering to herself.

Fulghum remembered this own parental moments. He also felt this wasn't the time for an unknown wise man to appear and explain to this vexed woman the deeper meaning of the mother questions.

Why? Because he didn't want to have to answer that other great mother question:

4. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

That's the big one isn't it? A flourishing life or otherwise depends on how we answer that one. Do you see yourself.....

As the centre of the universe – your needs, your wants are central to how you live.

OR do you see yourself as: As someone loved eternally by God; as a disciple of Jesus Christ; as some who loves, forgives and accepts

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

So there are 4 questions for you to ponder this week.

**WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHAT IN THE NAME OF JESUS ARE YOU DOING?
WHATEVER WILL YOU DO NEXT?
(TO WHAT DO YOU FEEL CALLED?)
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?**