

For these days ...

*‘Be still
and know
that I am God’*

Psalm 46.10

Dear friends, we find ourselves in uncharted waters, as individuals, and, as a church. In the midst of lockdown it is important, more than ever, that we keep in touch, stay connected, and find ways to love and serve. We cannot meet as usual or as we would like, especially on a Sunday and so together we are seeking new ways to be church. On Sunday past, I recored a short video message with reading, prayers and reflection and posted it on our Facebook pages, but I am conscious that not everyone has that at their fingertips. I am therefore going to send out an e-letter every week offering a little summary of the online service. As the days unfold, it might be nice to pop it through the door of a church family member who doesn't have internet access, but, for now, it's important that we heed the advice, *stay safe and stay at home*. Please don't hesitate to be in touch – even if it's just for a chat – it's good to talk!

Reading

Psalm 23 (NIV)

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Lectionary Readings

Lent 4

1 Samuel 16.1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5.8-14

John 9.1-41

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
 all the days of my life,
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
 forever.

***‘Come to me, all you
 who are weary and
 burdened, and I will
 give you rest.’***

Reflection

A couple of weeks ago I ordered a new running jumper with a slogan on it. It was a tough decision choosing between the options available, but I narrowed it down to two: *Run miles. Eat cake*, and the one that dropped through the letterbox last week. A simple sweater, with the word *Fearless* written upon it. In relation to my running ability, it is most definitely aspirational, but that word has been in my thoughts a lot this week. Not least, because of Psalm 23 – a well known and loved song - that speaks about a God who is with us in the highs and lows, even those darkest valleys, making the Psalmist David proclaim, ‘even there I will fear no evil.’

I don’t know how you are feeling, but there have been times in the last few days when thinking too far ahead along this road, has been quite overwhelming. Life has changed significantly in a short period of time, and no one has been left unaffected. What started as a few cancelled events here and there, has led to drastic measures to ensure the safety of all, especially the most vulnerable in our society.

Things are in flux and that can lead to uncertainty and fear. Particularly as we think about our loved ones, people who are ill and vulnerable, jobs and mortgages and rent, school and nursery and university and college closures and food and supermarkets. It is a strange time and perhaps I should leave my fearless sweater in it’s wrapper for the foreseeable: or perhaps not. For yes, there will be moments of anxiety and worry, as days give way to weeks and we wonder when and how this will be over, but in and through it all, I believe God, whose love for us does not change, will be right there with us, calming and encouraging us on.

And so, in this new place where we all find ourselves, may we remember to breathe deeply and find in this time moments for our souls to be refreshed and renewed, trusting in and leaning on the one who says, ‘come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.’ In the strangeness of it all, may we do just that – REST. Rest our hearts and minds from worry, rest from 24 hour news, rest from spending and buying things we don’t yet need and be responsible, stay safe and aspire to be fearless, leaning on each other,

through e-mails and letter and internet and phone - and by drawing on our faith, that reminds us that we are never truly alone.

Prayer

Loving God,
in these days of social distancing and isolation,
when everything is in flux,
help us to lean and rest in you,
and learn together new ways to live and love as a church.

May the anxious and overwhelmed,
Find peace and calm.

May the sick and the housebound,
Find healing and compassion.

May the doctors, nurses and carers,
Scientists and researchers and all front-line staff,
Find strength and support.

May families living in close proximity,
Find patience and humour.

May leaders,
Nationally and globally,
Find co-operation and unity.

And may we all,
Do our bit,
To stay calm and safe,
Taking a day at a time,
Making sure that we share,
So that everyone has enough.
We ask it all in Jesus' name,
Amen.

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