

PASTORAL LETTER FROM REVEREND SALLY COLEMAN – 31ST JULY-6TH AUGUST

31st July 2020

Dear Friends,

I am sitting in the sunshine writing this letter to you, enjoying a bit of summer in amongst all the rainy days and storms that we have experienced recently. I do hope that you have been able to do the same if only for a short while. In these days perhaps small things like a phone call from a friend or family member, a chance to sit in the sun or a moment to take in a beautiful view can bring us a break from some of the deeply anxious times we are living in. In my prayer book the night prayer section asks me to list 3 things I have been grateful for every day, and while some days are easier than others the discipline of doing this has been helpful, because it has reminded me that there is still much goodness and beauty in the world.

In these days of interrupted plans and difficult sometimes heart wrenching decisions thankfulness can remind us that God is still very much active among us, and while we know that in our heads, thankfulness brings that to life, and perhaps us into the light of remembering and seeing, and giving thanks and praise. I know for myself that in some of the most difficult circumstances turning to praise has helped me to refocus and to return to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and of course I am not suggesting during times of pain and anxiety that, that is easy. Sometimes we feel that the impossible is being asked of us, and that we don't have the resources to respond with. That is where this week's Gospel account helps us, we find the disciples with Jesus on a hillside, the crowds have gathered, and it is time for the evening meal. Jesus has not had a good day, first he heard the news of the execution of John the Baptist, so he tried to withdraw to the hills to pray, but the crowd followed him, and so out of compassion he taught them and healed their sick.

He must have been exhausted, but still he gave of himself, and while we don't see it recorded in Matthew's Gospel, other accounts (this miracle is recorded in all 4 Gospels) tell us that Jesus gave thanks:

“Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

Matthew 14: 13-21

Jesus gave thanks, and the crowd were fed, their needs were met out of a meagre offering of 5 loaves and 2 fish! In this account they are brought by the disciples, in others a young boy offers his lunch. What is significant though is that the offering, the meagre, not enough offering enabled the miracle. As I talk to church members and others about how they are feeling now, so often the problem of scarcity comes up. The feeling that everything is too much, that we can't get back to normal and possibly won't get back to normal, whatever normal is, here we are reminded that we can, and need only to bring what we have, in

faith and trust, and to place what we have into the hands of God, and if it seems like not enough that is okay.

Now I am not suggesting that a miracle will occur, though I am not denying the possibility either, what I am pointing to is first a willingness to share what we have, and second the thanks that was given as Jesus received the offering at the end of a long, tiring and bad day.

In these days we are doing our best to stay safe, and to keep others safe, to hope and to pray when we are faced with an uncertain future, to do what we can and no more. Let those be your thank offering to God, in trust and in hope, and may we find together the deep peace and blessing of one who reminds us that all will be well.

With those thoughts I leave you with the words of a hymn:

Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Longing for truth, we turn to You.

Make us Your own, your holy people

Light for the world to see.

Make us Your bread, broken for others

Shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light!...

Christ be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in Your church gathered today.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us Your building, sheltering others

Walls made of living stone.

Christ, be our light!...

Many the gift, many the people

Many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another

Making Your kingdom come.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Christ, be our light!...

Christ is our light, we continue to walk with and work with him through these days, taking one step at a time, bringing ourselves just as we are, and that is enough.

May God bless and keep you; may you know yourselves known and loved. Once again if you would like to or need to talk, please call me. You remain in my prayers



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