

24th September 2020

Dear Friends,

Here we are. At the end of September, and I don't know about you but I must admit that I wonder how on earth that happened, we have passed the point where the days are of equal length and moving towards a time where the days grow shorter, the seasons have definitely turned, the leaves all over my garden are a definite sign of that. Along with the changes in the seasons, this week we have received the news that our lives are now more restricted again, and with the warning that the restrictions might become even tougher. My son Jon and his fiancé Ellie have had to drastically alter their wedding plans, this time for the second time, and while that is frustrating they would both rather know that their loved ones are as safe as they can be.

Right back in March I remember writing to you that we love one another by crossing the street, not to join someone, but to avoid physical proximity, and that that is showing love. We will continue to wash our hands to wear masks when in public spaces indoors, and perhaps outdoors also when places are more crowded. The return to the workplace for some has been reversed, and many who had just returned to their offices are now back working at home. For some life has become extremely hard as their employers are unable to sustain their jobs, unemployment is rising, and foodbanks are noting a rise in demand. In other parts of the world of course Covid-19 is only making a difficult life even harder, refugees live in cramped conditions, wars continue, and poverty that forces people onto the streets and more. All these things should wake us to connect with the compassion of Christ and remember his command to love one another.

I say this, but I must admit that I am feeling somewhat overwhelmed at the moment, this week along with the changing seasons we passed the 6 month barrier of being fully woken to the pandemic when we in the UK went into lockdown, and we have been told that the restrictions put in place during the week are likely to continue for another 6 months. There is a lot of confusion around, and as I have said before it is so easy for us to look for somebody else to blame, the government are criticised, our neighbours are criticised, the young are at fault we are told, but then why are those vulnerable people going out anyway... the list could go on.

I suspect that we all need to find ways to be gentle with ourselves, to find a life giving thing to give our attention to, whether that is by getting out into the countryside, reading a book or enjoying a long bath, painting a picture or simply taking time to savour a coffee, or have a chat with a friend about nothing in particular! It can be so easy to get caught up with watching the news or worrying things out of proportion. It won't change how things are but it will grant us a break, and of course Jesus command to love the other was in the context of loving God and others as ourselves, we cannot love from an empty place!

We cannot love from an empty place, and of course God knew this, and in giving us the gift of himself left the glories of heaven identifying with our humanness by taking on flesh, we are reminded of this in one of the readings set for this coming Sunday:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2: 1-11)

Jesus emptied himself, but he also took time to fill up, he made time for prayer, for rest, for friends, and was always in relationship with God, living in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and the amazing truth for us is that we too are invited into that relationship. Just pause and ponder that, God invites us into a relationship, a life giving connection, offering God's self to us in the connecting presence of the Holy Spirit to fill us, the pattern and teaching of Jesus to guide us, all held by the all loving parent who created us and longs to create through us. We are invited to be co-creators with God, caring for others, caring for our world, and bringing glimpses and signs of heaven upon earth. You are called to be a sign of heaven on earth, a touch of heaven on earth, the voice and breath of heaven upon earth. To fulfil that calling requires that we retain a deep connection with the love that comes from God, learning to love others, to love ourselves from that place. We need perhaps to learn to see ourselves from the divine perspective that calls us fearfully and wonderfully made. You are fearfully and wonderfully made!

With that thought I leave you with the lyrics to this hymn:

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| <p>1. <i>May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.</i></p> <p>2. <i>May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.</i></p> <p>3. <i>May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,</i></p> | <p><i>That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.</i></p> <p>4. <i>May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing,
This is victory.</i></p> <p>5. <i>May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.</i></p> |
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I wonder which verse stands out for you, which verse you might choose to be your prayer as you go through the week ahead. Perhaps you would like to share that with a friend, or with me. I am choosing verse 3 this week. For me seeking the peace of God is so important in these times.

Finally, I say again please be in touch if you would like to talk about anything, you remain in my prayers. Take care of yourselves, love God, love one another.

Peace and blessings



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