

NEWSLINK 24th March 2020 and Daily reflection.

The latest Government guidance following the Prime Minister's statement last night is:

1. Everyone is required to stay home except for:
 - Shopping for basics such as food and medicine
 - One form of exercise such as walk or run alone or with members of your household
 - Medical need or providing care to the vulnerable
 - Travel to and from work only if absolutely cannot be done from home
 2. Non-essential shops and public spaces closed
 3. Public gatherings of more than two are to be stopped
- These measures will be enforced by the police using fines and powers to disperse gatherings.

Christ Church has already taken the following measures:

THE CHURCH CENTRE

The Church Centre was closed on Monday until further notice. This was as advised by the Bishop's covering London Boroughs because of the rapid increase in infections across London.

Yesterday I wrote the following (but delayed sending it until the PM's announcement):

As I write we are awaiting further instructions from the Government but the restrictions for all of society will get stricter before they ease.

Therefore, we need to do two things:

1. Follow advice

We need to distance ourselves physically, maintain good hygiene by washing hands and eradicating germs as much as we can.

2. Maintain Christ Church Fellowship

Phone, e-mail, WhatsApp, skype and video calling, dropping notes round if can't get someone on the phone,, chatting over the garden fence - at a suitable distance. Praying on the phone. Maintaining contact with your house Group. Finding new contacts if you are not in a group. Reading the bible, praying, listening, sharing what God might be saying; weighing it and seeking advice and counsel.

And contacting the pastoral staff if you need to - Pastoral team, Clergy, Chuk and Jude.

Whatever we face, you don't need to do it alone.

And be ready to maintain and develop what we do over a prolonged period. "Its not a sprint" as Sarah said to me yesterday."

UPDATE ON SERVICES

Thank you to all those who made the online services possible on Sunday. We had one or two glitches but otherwise the feedback was very positive.

This Sunday we hope to have more and varied content including:

- videos
- live pre-recorded music
- an audio sermon
- resources for Explosive Kids
- a live stream/pre-recorded YouTube Rise service

For Holy Week plans have already started for an online Palm Sunday, daily reflections for every day of Holy week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday (together with the Churches Together in the morning) including an "Hour at the Cross" reflection. And of course Easter Sunday. Please pray for these preparations.

NB: that the current restrictions are to be in place until at least 3 weeks time when the Government will review their effectiveness. That takes us to Easter Monday bank holiday. There will be **no gathered services over holy Week** and Easter this year.

REFLECTION

Where is God in this?

I have been considering this question.

Here are some answers that some may come to.

1. It is a global spiritual attack
2. It is God expressing his displeasure with a rebellious world
3. It is part of being in a broken world
4. The gospel is a lie, God doesn't exist, and this life is all there is.

Each possible answer leads us to a different scriptural response.

At root however the answer is the same for each. That is where I would like to start today, (see the reflection below). Over the coming days we will explore what the implication of each of the possible answers to where is God in this, might be.

Today however, I would like to reflect on God through today's Morning Prayer.

The service opens with "*Lord open our lips, and our mouth shall declare your praise!*"

Praise him. Look to Jesus. Don't look at the waves. Look at Jesus.

Got to be a good start.

Then, before we get on to the readings the leader says:

*The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.*

Silence is kept.

*As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.*

All: Amen.

Each day we offer up the day to come. We rejoice in its newness. We rejoice that it is a gift from God. And we pray for his presence in it. His light. That our hearts will be set on fire for him. With love for him. Not just today but forever.

Fire for him, for he is an all consuming fire.

He puts his fire in us. And that fire burns up the chaff, purifies, just like with silver and gold and makes us burn for his kingdom to come.

The Psalm today was **Psalm 54**. It comes with a refrain, a prayer to sum up what the Psalmist might be saying.

Behold, God is my helper.

*O living God,
reach through the violence of the proud
and the despair of the weak
to create in Jesus Christ
a people free to praise your holy name,
now and for ever.*

No matter how many times you may have said “What is wrong with people?” in the last few days (I certainly have), God can reach through despair and weakness to create a people free to praise. So praise him!

The Old Testament reading was **Exodus 2:23-3:20 (NRSV)** which includes these words *The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.*

It is ok to cry out to God. He knows our hearts and our situation. He is listening. *And he hears.*

Moses ... came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

God catches Moses’ attention – with fire. God can burn in a dry bush and yet it is not consumed, it does not scorch or char. God is saying – “Look at me” , and Moses goes closer to see what is going on. He approaches holy ground and has to take his sandals off. God calls him by name.

Then the Lord said, *‘I have observed the misery of my people ... I have heard their cry ... Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them ... (to Moses) ‘I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.’*

God not only heard, he was moved to action. He hears our cries. He does what it takes for us to worship again. But meanwhile, we say “O Lord, open our lips, and our mouth shall proclaim your praise” – whether we are on the mountain or not. We praise him.

But Moses said to God,

Uh oh. “But” says Moses. Doubts in the very face of God. “Whom shall I say sent me?”

God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ He said further, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ’ God also said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, “The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you”: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.

I am. The all-encompassing name. I am. Not I am this or I am that. But just, I am.

And to the Israelites he promised the wonders he would perform before they would be released from captivity.

God promised something big. **He did not promise it now.** In fact it takes 11 more chapters before they finally cross the sea into the desert beyond!

God has something big planned beyond this isolation, beyond this virus.

God heard the cries of his people Israel. He hears our cries today. He is worthy of our praise and he is bigger than anything in this world. He is the “I am” – it is his name.

And he has a mediator who stands beside him; for us. Who died; for us. We turn to **Hebrews 9:15-end.**

*For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, **now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.***

Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we first started updating the website and trying to offer daily updates, the first icon that was developed was called “Virus update” with a picture of a virus cell which we have become so familiar with on the news and elsewhere.

I refused to use it. It was thoughtful to have prepared it, but it struck a chord.

“We shouldn’t be looking at the virus. We should be looking at Jesus. Look at the waves too much and we sink. Look at Jesus and we can walk on water”

So we considered calling it the “Jesus Update”!

That would have taken too much explaining, so simply we have the Newslink with Daily reflection. This has been today’s Jesus Update!

Look at Jesus. The mediator. Cry out to God called simply “I am”.

Stay safe. Stay home.

Praise him.

God bless

Doug

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>