

Earlsdon May 2 2021

Easter week 5

Stay connected

This week we explore remaining in the right place to grow.

Bible reading John chapter 15 verses 1-8

Prayer

Day by day, dear Lord,
of thee three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly,
to love thee more dearly,
to follow thee more nearly,
day by day.

(St Richard of Chichester)

Remaining in the right place to grow.

Well it has finally happened although this is not a live Zoom I am recording this message and you will watch it online (or read it from a letter). I have been very resistant to changing the way I preach. I have got used to writing sermons out in full and that has been a good new challenge. It has given me the discipline to study and to make my notes readable with good format and punctuation. Usually when I preach in person I study the Bible readings, make notes then do a spider graph of the points I need to make. Those notes were not good grammatically as they were only a memory aid.

So the new way of preparing my preaching has been good for me, as in lockdown it was a skill I had lost and gained again. As a student local preacher I had to submit long hand notes and have them assessed. Maybe it was the thought of being given marks out of 10 that worried me.

But I have resisted doing online preaching as I don't believe it should become a way we communicate as congregations. It is very good while we reopen our Churches but not as a continuous thing.

Last week was a very happy time for me. I could have a back massage and reflexology, a hair cut and swim /exercise in a swimming pool again.

Most of all it was lovely to drive along the M6 in the early morning sunshine to go for a swim. I could see and talk to the receptionist and meet people at the gym. I joked with the receptionist that she had been on the same phone call overnight. Why she asked me do people want to keep me talking? (She had 50 calls to fit in that day) I replied that everyone was lonely and just wanted a chat.

As gym members people could meet others, exercise and relax. As we were not safe to meet we had all missed the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual good we found there. That takes me back to the work I did with children and my training as a Nursery Nurse. I was taught that unless we have a balance of their needs met children cannot grow effectively. As adults we are not happy and fulfilled in isolation, as we have found.

We as Church's have to help each other break out of the habits of being isolated. I have adapted to isolation by finding mindless things to do. They didn't do anything but pass empty hours. I have cupboards full of craft materials that are unused, books to read yet I was apathetic and did very little reading. I have to become active again in all aspects of my life. To make me happy and to enable me to go ahead with my Christian calling.

But I naturally feel fearful of being with people in case I become ill. I have got used to ordering everything online and now shopping is not something I want to do. I was born in Hinckley and every Monday there was market day. Now they have other market days but when I was at senior school I loved to walk through the bustling town on my way home from school. I would meet my Aunties and Uncles and enjoy myself. I still think to this day- "oh it's Monday it's market day".

We cannot let our Church services become a fond memory. Our communities need our help in recovering from the pandemic. But first of all we as Christians need to regain our strength. Jesus from the beginning of his ministry built a team of disciples. He may have expected their gifts and abilities to be individual but they were called into fellowship. Their strength was to depend on God and abide in him.

With God as our loving father we all have a place to be safe and to grow. Our Church's are not clubs or social meeting places, they are built of believers who meet in God's name. We build each other up and show each other the love of God. As we plan our future we need to treasure everyone God sends to be alongside us. To love one another as we love ourselves, and to love God who first loved us.

A Blessing

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight,
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
Into the light.

John L. Bell (b.1949)

(Singing the Faith 648)