

Easter 5 – 20th May 2020 Revd Noelle Taylor

There are 3 points in today's Gospel that spoke to me.

The first is: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

“Do not let”, how often do we allow or let ourselves to be troubled or worried especially in this C19 world. There is certainly enough material around to feed a troubled heart, and yet Jesus commanded his disciples, and us, not to **let** our hearts be troubled. Not because there would be no trouble ahead – the disciples faced plenty. Even so Jesus said, do not **let** your hearts be troubled either by what is going on now or by what might happen.

This is a growing point for each of us although perhaps some of us have more developed worry muscles than others. My worry muscles are in excellent form, and I can plan all night for things that never actually happen. However God is teaching me there is a better way. I now endeavour to turn my focus away from my worry or the situation and remind myself that I trust God – saying this out loud is actually helpful it somehow confirms my trust and resolve to trust. “I trust you Lord”.

So why should we not let our hearts be troubled? Well, I wonder how often does what you worry about come to pass, or the worry and plans you made actually help? So often we don't see the situation as clearly as we might. But God knows and sees clearly and God wants to spare us all that time wasted worrying. Jesus wants us to learn to trust the God who knows each of us intimately, evermore deeply, to trust God with our lives, the lives of our loved ones and all the circumstances of our lives. Surely now is a good time to practise this!

The second point is: Don't you know me, Philip?

The disciples had been with Jesus for 3 years and yet still didn't really appreciate who he was. Likewise our understanding of who God is is something that grows and develops often quite slowly – we are surely no brighter than the first disciples! Yet Jesus trusted the flawed folk he chose to follow him and he trusts us.

As we learn not to let our hearts be troubled, we learn how much God can be trusted and we will also gradually see the character of our loving God more and more. Over the last few weeks of isolation the WhatsApp group have been privileged to see some photos of the area in which we live that various people have taken and it has helped us recognise and appreciate the beauty that is all around us. It takes time to see what is all around us, it takes time to appreciate the beautiful character of the God who calls us to be family.

Finally: You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

It occurs to me that we tend to make this phrase into a formula – we end our prayers in Jesus' name and wonder why he has not done what he said and sorted it. Now of course there are all sorts of things going on here which I am not going to address now, for the bit about this phrase that struck me was the “in my name”. I am not sure Jesus meant this as an instruction to add his name to the end of a prayer. I think he meant, if there is stuff that needs to happen to grow my kingdom (my name), enable people to come to know me, my love and to become part of God's family – ask me for it, and it will be done.

What do we currently need to enable us to be the gift to the community we desire to be? What do we need to enable those around us to see the love of God in us and so come to know this love? How are we in this current situation enabling God's kingdom to grow – what do we need God to do to resource us or enable us? Jesus said “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it...”

So, maybe now is the perfect time to practise trusting rather than worrying. By doing so I suspect we will also gain a better understanding of the God we serve and the depths of God's love for us. Moreover as our relationship deepens and grows we may also gain a clearer understanding of what we need as individuals and as a church to enable us to proclaim the name of Jesus and the hope that Jesus brings even in dark times and so be enabled to ask for this so God's kingdom grows even in these difficult times.

God bless you.

Noelle