

Second Sunday of Easter - April 19, 2020

Acts 2 v 14, 22-33 - David Bebo

Prayer:

Here is a short prayer before I begin my talk today

Lord,

There are three foundations of our Christian faith. Our trust in God, love of our fellow neighbour and a belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. May these give us comfort during these perilous times

Help us follow them to glorify your name.

Amen

Uncertainty and Trust in God

I want to talk to you today about the Christian faith and the current topic that is dominating our lives right now, the Coronavirus. There are three key aspects of our faith which are helping each and every one of us through this horrible crisis. They are our trust in God, the love of our neighbours and the Resurrection of Christ.

We are all living on a roller coaster of uncertainty right now.

When I started thinking about this talk in late March nothing was certain. First I didn't even know if there would be a Sunday service this week. As we all know now there are no church services. The church is closed. Even Charlie is prohibited from praying in his own church.

We are currently in lock down. You can exercise briefly but you can't drive to a beauty spot to do it.

You can shop for essentials but there were debates about whether chocolate Easter eggs were an essential food item and at least one police chief wants to start searching shopping trolleys.

You can talk to someone you meet when you are out but it must be from two metres apart. Under no circumstances are you allowed to visit family or friends.

We are all happy to comply as best we can because the stakes are so high. It is literally a matter of life or death for ourselves and others that we do.

There have been varying views about when we will get back to normal. Some said Easter, then it was the end of April, then end of May or June or even the end of this year, next year or never depending on who you listen to. Nobody knows for sure. Nobody is sure what kind of immediate or long lasting impact it will have on the economy. Uncertain times indeed.

All we can do is let the medical experts and the government plan for the worst while the rest of us can only pray for the best. That is the thing. They say there are no atheists in a fox hole. Right now we are all in the deepest of fox holes. If the Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister can get a dose of the virus as well as doctors and nurses then we are all possible victims.

This is where our trust in God comes into play. Since life is so uncertain and we don't know what is around the corner we might as well live our lives day by day trusting that whatever is in store for us fits into God's plan.

Love of your fellow neighbours

Know however you are not alone. The second helpful aspect of our faith is the injunction by Christ to love your neighbour as our self. That is certainly in evidence during this crisis. The doctors, nurses and other NHS staff are risking their lives to care for us. Not just the victims of Coronavirus but all the normal ailments that plague us in our day to day life. It's a complicated task but they are doing a great job. Every Thursday we all get the opportunity to show our appreciation by making as much noise as we possibly can.

Thanks to the NHS Volunteer programme there are over 750,000 people who have put themselves forward to help the more vulnerable people in our society. That's a lot of people who are demonstrating their concern for their neighbours.

Policemen, workers in supermarkets, delivery drivers, people in essential jobs and organisations that are redefining their role to help people all deserve our thanks.

It's important to note that not every one of those who are providing support are Christian. We live in a multicultural society with a variety of faith groups and people of no faith. Whatever motivates them whether it is the teachings of their own faith or their own personal values to help their fellow man we are all the beneficiaries of their kindness.

We know however our motivation to help one other comes from Christ's teachings. The golden rule to treat others the way you want to be treated is a good way to live your life, especially now.

Resurrection

This brings us to the third and final aspect of our Christian faith which is helping to sustain us during this troubling time, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Last week we celebrated that event. It is likely that our 2020 Easter celebrations will go down in history as the most unusual ever. We did not gather together in our church but virtually at our computer screens. Different to say the least but the spirit of Christ was with us however we marked the occasion.

This week we are exploring the aftermath of Christ's Resurrection.

In our reading today from Acts it says:

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was accredited by God..he was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep a hold on him.

His death and resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. It is the promise of a life everlasting for ourselves and our loved ones that sustains us in difficult times.

One of the cruellest aspects of this pandemic is the fact that so many people are dying in Intensive Care Units without any family present. Nurses are doing their best to comfort the dying as well as the relatives who are not allowed to visit their loved one in their final moments but it isn't the same. The dying and the living are essentially alone in their grief.

Christ's promise of life everlasting has been a comfort to Christians from that first Easter morning. In these troubling times it continues to comfort us when someone we love is taken from us. We have faith that someday we will be in their presence again.

So there you have it. Take each day as it comes and trust in God. Help one another as others help you. And put your faith in Christ's promise of eternal life. Let these three pillars of the Christian faith help sustain you in the difficult days ahead.