

Greenways Benefice Weekly Devotional (No. 2)

29th March 2020

Philippians 4: 4-9, Isaiah 26:3

By now we are all feeling the effects of coronavirus.....social distancing , self isolation ,empty shelves at the shops but whatever else we think ,this time is a great leveller and suddenly we are all in the same boat.

We can hear one another's grievances . Isolation, loneliness , lack of employment , school closures , child care , the strain on those working in the NHS . Our circumstances have changed very quickly, lives have been disrupted and the future is uncertain for us all.

Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi was written while he was in prison. He wrote it to thank them for the gift he had received during his time of need and reassured them, so that they may have courage and confidence in spite of all his troubles and their own as well.

In verse 8 he writes about attitudes well pleasing to God . Whatever is true, honourable , just, pure , pleasing ,commendable and worthy of praise , we should fill our hearts and minds with these things and show them to others and now seems to be a good time to do this.

In chapter 4 Paul tells us 'not to worry about anything, but in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.'

Especially now, we worry. It is very understandable and human but worry is counterproductive, it takes all our energy , suffocates our spirit and robs us of the peace that comes from knowing the God who can handle anything and through whom all things are possible. Worry is like a no-confidence vote in God. Each time we worry it is like saying 'I don't think I can trust God in this matter' or I don't believe that God can handle this' .

But **our God IS a mighty God and he 'holds us in his hands.'**

God does not want us to carry our burdens alone. He wants to be alongside carrying them for us , as in 1 Peter we read:

"God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him " and when God becomes the major part of our lives then we can begin to find peace .

Paul says that we need to have an attitude of peace .

" And the peace of God,which surpasses all understanding , will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" . The result of casting all our cares on God in prayer is that His peace will guard or sustain our hearts and minds.

“O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer”

(Joseph Scriven)

So anxiety and worry can rule our hearts or we can let the peace of God rule in our hearts . We are all eagerly seeking peace especially now, but we can never find it apart from Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.

In Isaiah 26 verse 3 we read “You Lord give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in You”.

Constantly focusing on the circumstances around us, and that is understandable judging by the constant media coverage, causes more anxiety because circumstances are constantly changing and may spin out of control. However God never changes and nothing ever spins out of His control so let us trust Him in all things putting our confidence and trust in His mercy, let us allow Him to carry our burdens and when we offer our prayers to God , may we leave them there.

Take a moment to reflect on this...

And then let's pray together ...

Almighty God we thank you and praise you for your constant love towards us. Many are carrying burdens of worry and uncertainty at this difficult time and many feel isolated and alone . Help us to trust you and lay our burdens at your feet. May we all be very aware of your presence in our lives and may your light guide us and give us peace .Amen.