

Dear all

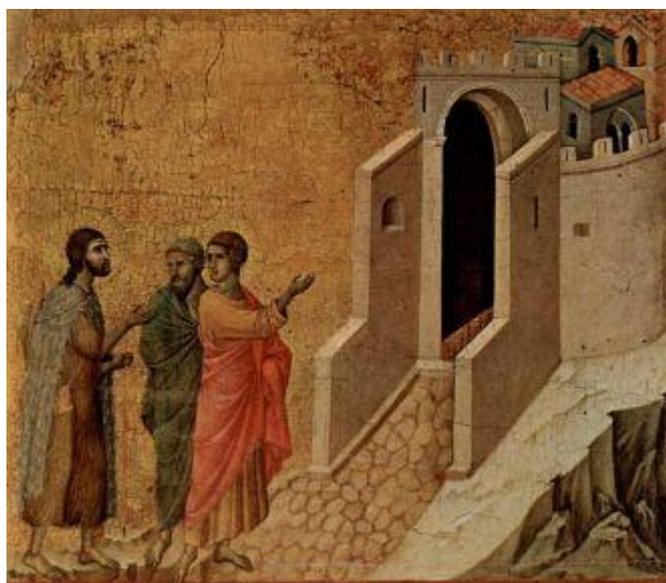
From now on my posts and the Sunday Communion service should be a little different. I have just purchased a streaming licence from CCLI, which allows us to stream performances of copyright music (provided it is our own home-grown performances, or we have the permission of the performers). This is distinct from the links I give – these follow Facebook guidelines, or whatever platform they are loaded on. I hope you will enjoy the snippets when they come.

A little treat in the meantime for all those who, like me, were brought up on BCP Matins & Evensong. This Matins was posted earlier today from Lincoln Cathedral. It includes Psalm 23. All canticles are to Anglican chant. The anthem is Lead me Lord by SS Wesley.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rj1Qt1xzqQ&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0_AhV1JbKdbh6wOL5RQMsOwCTn303jxOPtaeTihjwB4rTC9DT2SsNZoUA

An interesting reflection from my former area bishop, The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark, Bishop of Croydon:

One of the many things I've been missing this Easter season is the hymns - that whole repertoire of song which signifies the move from Lent and Holy Week into resurrection joy. Yes, I can sing along to myself, or to YouTube, but it's not the same as being part of a congregation. But I was brought up a bit short when I read the gospel for this Sunday, the Third Sunday of Easter - which is the story of the disciples' walk to, and run back from, Emmaus.



What made me stop and think was the different experience that I had of that story in this time and in the midst of this experience. Previously – and I don't think I'm alone – I had tended to skip to the end of the story. The disciples having listened to Jesus teaching them on the road, and seen him breaking the bread, are so overwhelmed with the news of the resurrection that they set off in the dangerous night back to Jerusalem. But the previous twenty seven verses of the reading tell a very different tale. The disciples are despondent and bewildered, trying to make sense of what has happened to them, to Jesus and to all their hopes and expectations. The life they thought they were leading, the direction they were going, seems to have come to a dead stop.

And when Jesus gets through to them what has really happened, that he has risen, it is not as if their previous hopes are also resuscitated. The life they had been living has still irrevocably gone, but the future that is now opening up before them is one in which Jesus is alive. But it takes time to change course, to start really living in the light of resurrection. When Cleopas and his companion get back to Jerusalem, they tell the other disciples – but when Jesus then appears to them they are 'startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost' (Lk 24:37).

So much as I love the hymn, I'm beginning to rethink its second phrase. "This joyful Eastertide, away with care and sorrow!" Well yes, but care and sorrow are not switches you can flick, so that all is suddenly joy

and delight. This is a different sort of Eastertide, one in which there is tragedy and sadness, especially for those ill or bereaved. Even for those of us not personally touched by COVID-19, there is an increasing sense of foreboding. What will the future look like? One thing is certain, that it won't be an immediate return to the days before the pandemic. For many, their personal future is uncertain, even bleak. For all of us, wherever we are in the world, there are economic and political uncertainties. This Easter is a season to live with the rest of the story, to join in with the uncertainty, the confusion, the fear even, as Jesus' followers try to grapple with this new reality of resurrection.

Because that new reality is always our hope. We can't flick a switch and move on into the kingdom of heaven, any more than we can decide we've had enough of coronavirus and get back to life as it was. But we can hold fast to the hope that lies before us, that beyond our anxiety and exhaustion and fear, Jesus is walking with us, joining us as we get on with our lives, living with us in our solitude or accompanying us in our workplace. Wherever we are, he will be.

I had a message from a very old friend of mine this morning, whose daughter had a scare 6 months into her pregnancy. Thank God it all seems OK – but I was reminded that, despite the current emergency, the NHS continues to do its normal stuff so well as well! I hope we remember how much we owe them after things return to 'normal'.

Following this theme, Nick Fawcett's prayer for today:

Thank you, Lord, for those who are willing to go the extra mile

Thank you, Lord, for those who are willing to go the extra mile,
to put their own health at risk, at this time of crisis,
for the sake of others;
to work extra hours,
even to give freely of their time and expertise,
for the greater good.
Thank you especially for doctors, nurses and medics,
working long and demanding shifts;
for those coming out of retirement to offer their services;
for all those striving to provide care,
even though it means they may well end up needing care themselves.
Thank you for those working in shops and supermarkets,
those in our emergency and essential services,
teachers providing cover for children and young people,
delivery drivers working to supply our needs:
these, and so many more –
a host of people, recognised and unrecognised,
without whose efforts our normality would disintegrate completely.
Keep them safe, we pray.
Keep them well.
Watch over them and their loved ones,
and help us to appreciate in these difficult days
the few to whom we owe so much.
Amen.

Prayers from Nadia Bolz-Weber:

Holy God hear my intercessions,

For those who are giving birth alone; for those who are grieving without their people; for the beleaguered parents who ran out of creative ideas two weeks ago; for those who don't know where this week's grocery money will come from; for everyone who has watched the date of their wedding, or their graduation, or their birthday, or their dissertation defence, or their long hoped for vacation, or their family reunion, or the "non-essential" medical procedure they hoped would change their life, come and go; for the exhausted and the despairing, I ask that your comfort, your presence, and your peace be felt. And if that's not possible, could you just nudge the right person to reach out and call them? Just that Lord. Just that?

Holy God hear my praise:

For the animals who get to have their people home all day; for a slow enough life that allows for baking and a garden and the use of cloth napkins; for the comfort of sweat pants; for the bursts of creativity that keep coming from artists and musicians and writers; for the people on social media who are getting us through this: [*specific cultural references removed*]; for the journalists who just keep going so we can be informed; for the gratitude shown for health workers and grocery store cashiers and delivery folks; for the 2 rolls of toilet paper my downstairs neighbours left as a gift for me; for the things I no longer take for granted - I give you thanks.

Amen.

Stay safe

Blessings and love

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