

Dear all

I understand from my local weather expert (Helen!) that the weather is about to change. We've had an amazing run of good weather, and so many people have commented that, at least the opportunity to get out in the garden has helped the lockdown. I understand that rain is due. What isn't so much fun for us will be good for the garden, and, I believe, the farms locally.

Our area bishop, the Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain has recorded reflection on the gospel reading yesterday, from Luke 24:

<https://www.facebook.com/lincolnbishopsoffice/videos/245030786556773/>

The Psalm set for tomorrow Morning Prayer is Psalm 98 – sound familiar? Here is a version from the BCP by Guildford Cathedral. Not a bad recording for almost 50 years old, beautifully enunciated.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3O57yufJqE>

An old friend has posted this beautiful recording of herself singing the lovely song 'Losing my mind' – written by Stephen Sondheim for the musical 'Follies', and recorded by, amongst others, Liza Minelli and the Pet Shop Boys. Carol is Benedict's Godmother.

[https://soundcloud.com/carol-ann-west/losing-my-mind?fbclid=IwAR3eoXZtbW6RSC1CqF9em5o7b\\_EPSjGMNKAZI-U2I-LXC-TRSSD4NcoII-0](https://soundcloud.com/carol-ann-west/losing-my-mind?fbclid=IwAR3eoXZtbW6RSC1CqF9em5o7b_EPSjGMNKAZI-U2I-LXC-TRSSD4NcoII-0)

I was set a challenge on Facebook the other day – think of a band (rock, pop etc) name for every letter in the alphabet. On our walk yesterday, Helen and I decided to do it, and also added finding a song for every letter too. We managed it, including for the letters X and Z – unexpectedly we found it easier to get bands for Z than O! You might want to have a go yourselves. If you want to be more 'holy' how about a biblical character for every letter?

Something silly: Philip Astle has sent me this link, where Trump's recommendation to inject disinfectant to cure COVID-19 is set as a Mozart operatic recitative.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILdSUNES9ZA&feature=youtu.be>

The St Paul's Cathedral reflection for today:

Be Gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in Distress: Specially-commissioned reflections on the wisdom of the Psalms for a time of Pandemic

Psalm 31:9-16 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>9</sup>Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eye wastes away from grief,

my soul and body also.

<sup>10</sup>For my life is spent with sorrow,  
and my years with sighing;  
my strength fails because of my misery,  
and my bones waste away.

<sup>11</sup>I am the scorn of all my adversaries,  
a horror to my neighbours,  
an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
those who see me in the street flee from me.

<sup>12</sup>I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;  
I have become like a broken vessel.

<sup>13</sup>For I hear the whispering of many—  
terror all around!—  
as they scheme together against me,  
as they plot to take my life.

<sup>14</sup>But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, “You are my God.”

<sup>15</sup>My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

<sup>16</sup>Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.

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Although the Psalmist is writing in a very different context, there are extraordinary echoes for us here of our present situation, even being avoided in the street... The parallels are not exact, but verses 12-13 could have chilling resonances for some elderly people in care homes. Not that there is a plot to take their life, but some of the present public discourse implies that such lives have already been written off, are the inevitable and necessary casualties of the crisis.

And there is, buried or not so buried in many of us, terror, bound up in a strange way with grief at so much loss of opportunity, loss of intimacy. All sorts of things I planned for the next few months are gone; I live both with the frustration and sorrow of that, and also the real fear that being in a high-risk group I could be dead in a fortnight.

And yet, and yet, and yet, like so many lament psalms, this makes a turn to trust and to prayer. God is God, beyond knowing, and yet God has made himself known – we can cry out to him ‘You are my God’ – we can accept, and draw deep comfort from, a sense that our times are in his hands, and in all those times, nothing can separate us from his love (Rom. 8).

I am struck too by the way the beginning and end of this passage make links with that most ancient of blessings, the one from Numbers 6. I give it in the version I learned, long ago:

May the Lord bless you and keep you  
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you  
May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you his peace.

Christopher Southgate

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark