

Dear all

You may be wondering where letter 41 was. That was the lyrics and liturgy for Sunday. I can't believe we've reached letter 42. I may possibly cut down the number of letters – it depends if I can think of something worth saying! While I think about it, I have a funeral to take tomorrow (Tuesday), so I will be taking Thursday off this week, as well as Friday Bank Holiday.

Those who are fans of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will know that 42 is the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything – though, having calculated the answer, nobody actually knew what the question was. It reminds me a bit of the old song *Jesus is the answer* by Andre Crouch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKHpwGR7Bs>

This in turn reminds me (more scurrilously!) of the young curate who, in an attempt to relate to the children, facing the Sunday School for the first time, asked "what's small, furry and brownish-grey?". Silence. (Slightly more nervous) – "Come on... what's small, furry and brownish-grey, big bushy tail?". Silence... (By now sweating, feeling he has totally failed to communicate) "Come on, surely someone must know... what's small, furry and brownish-grey, big bushy tail, eats nuts?". A small hand raises slowly. The relieved curate says "yes Julie?". Julie replies "well, I know the answer's got to be Jesus, but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me!".

I wonder if, sometimes, the statement "Jesus is the answer" is just a bit too pat. It's the sort of thing that can be flung at people that will be guaranteed to shut them up! A bit like that other 'unanswerable' statement "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it." The implication is that if you fall, if you cannot endure it, it must be your fault. So, to add to what is already tearing you apart, you can now add failing God to the list!

I won't go into the context of the passage now – it's not as obvious and as general as you might imagine – but it is an important word for the context we find ourselves in now. Some of us can manage fine. Perhaps we're not as extrovert as others... we've got family we share with... we've got a reasonable income, or reserves... we've got a large enough house... a garden... space to exercise... For others, it's not so easy. Perhaps this might be the testing that is too much to bear. Or perhaps that testing is another sort... We cannot say what someone else is living through.

The following was posted a few days ago on Facebook:

*Perspective:*

*WE ARE NOT IN THE SAME BOAT ...*

*I heard that we are all in the same boat, but it's not like that. We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat. Your ship could be shipwrecked and mine might not be. Or vice versa.*

*For some, quarantine is optimal. A moment of reflection, of re-connection, easy in flip flops, with a cocktail or coffee. For others, this is a desperate financial & family crisis.*

*For some that live alone they're facing endless loneliness. While for others it is peace, rest & time with their mother, father, sons & daughters.*

*With the weekly increase in unemployment some are bringing in more money to their households than they were working. Others are working more hours for less money due to pay cuts or losses in sales.*

*For some not getting on with their Family domestic abuse is rife...we never know what goes on behind closed doors.*

*Some were concerned about getting a certain calhocolate for Easter while others were concerned if there would be enough bread, milk and eggs for the weekend.  
Some want to go back to work because they don't qualify for unemployment and are running out of money.  
Others want to kill those who break the quarantine.  
Some are home spending 2-3 hours/day helping their child with online schooling while others are spending 2-3 hours/day to educate their children on top of a 10-12 hour workday.  
Some have experienced the near death of the virus, some have already lost someone from it and some are not sure if their loved ones are going to make it. Others don't believe this is a big deal.  
Some have faith in God and expect miracles during this 2020. Others say the worst is yet to come.  
So, friends, we are not in the same boat. We are going through a time when our perceptions and needs are completely different.  
Each of us will emerge, in our own way, from this storm. It is very important to see beyond what is seen at first glance. Not just looking, actually seeing.  
We are all on different ships during this storm experiencing a very different journey.  
Realize that and be kind.  
Unknown author*

Jesus comes to speak peace. He spoke peace to the storm... he spoke peace to the disciples after the resurrection. Sometimes that speaking may be the merest whisper that is almost drowned out by the storm and darkness around. But it is still there – He is still there. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb in darkness, and her Lord was not there. She stayed weeping, and, when she heard that voice, at first she did not recognise it. And then He called her name...

May we too hear Him calling our name, and may we find that peace.

Ann Meekings has shared this beautiful version of the Aaronic Blessing. “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtll3mNj5U&feature=youtu.be>

You may be more familiar with the version by John Rutter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcYzO8Y4PH0>

Something else I have just come across is a video of The Five Mystical Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams. These are settings of 5 of George Herbert's poems to music by RVW. This version is a 'lockdown' version, recorded by the choir of the Temple Church in London. This has the added delight of being signed. It adds a whole dimension to songs when you can see how they are interpreted visually.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOoom1b2IGE&fbclid=IwAR1yCaIn6FZ9AFAae98efYDAhWvDSUpWkbHSNjPs\\_IUdikoIGQ3e0X42rZo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOoom1b2IGE&fbclid=IwAR1yCaIn6FZ9AFAae98efYDAhWvDSUpWkbHSNjPs_IUdikoIGQ3e0X42rZo)

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark