

Henley-in-Arden Baptist Church
“Staying Connected” 2 – Sunday 29th March 2020

Staying connected to God and each other while not meeting as church in the normal way.

I am writing this on Friday following last night’s 8pm Applause for the NHS workers and others and after the news that over 600,000 have stepped up as volunteers. This crisis is bringing out a lot of good qualities in humanity, even as at the same time we are being stretched and there is a sense of difficulty and painful circumstance to come.

As we go through these unprecedented times, I have been reflecting on what lessons we might draw from this for now, and for when it’s over. Sometimes it is good to ‘step out’ of the immediate circumstance and see something of the ‘big picture’ perhaps. One of the great Psalms in the bible is Psalm 8. Attributed to David some 3000 years ago, it was quoted by astronauts in the early days of space travel as they gave glory to God.

The Psalm reminds us of the dignity of mankind, but also our reliance on God as creator. I believe the bible encourages us to hold both those things together.

Psalm 8

- ¹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.
- ² Through the praise of children and infants

- you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
- ³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
- ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
- ⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- ⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
- ⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
- ⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
- ⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Humanity as a whole, and each person in particular, has an inherent dignity, and we are meant to shine! But let’s remember that this is a gift from the creator. Perhaps we, as a society, are being reminded by this global crisis not to become too conceited. We are not in control of all things. Our need of God is greater than ever, and always has been. As well as the organisational challenges, we are witnessing the sadness and heartbreak of instances where providing proper human dignity is difficult...

God has made us to be in relationship with Himself. And the Psalm reminds us that we are dependent on Him for our flourishing.

And so, today, in the midst of the reality of our present anxieties and the difficulties that we are facing, we are reminded that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, cares for us, and offers tremendous comfort.

There's a hymn that has this verse:

*Father-like He tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame He knows;
in His hands He gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Widely as His mercy flows.*

Fun Quiz Competition – Can you recall the name of the hymn and other verses (without looking it up!)? Let me know sometime...

Lord God, our heavenly Father, we ask for Your mercy on us. We thank You that You are with us, and that You love us with an everlasting love. We bring our prayers to You for a world struggling to cope with this virus and its effects; help us all to play our part in this current 'battle' and give wisdom, skill, and strength especially to those in front line positions, and positions of government and responsibility.

We pray for our loved ones; for those struggling with health, for those who are anxious. Father, meet their needs, and be especially close to them at this time. And for ourselves too: help us to look to You, our inspiration, and the source of all compassion, life, love and hope. Hear our prayers which we bring in Jesus' name.
Amen

Please continue to pray! And to keep in touch with folk by telephone.

The following services this Sunday may be of interest to those not online:

8:10am Radio 4 – A 40 minutes service from Wesley's Chapel, London

11:30am BBC1 - A 30 minutes service from Bangor Cathedral



And finally, as ever, please do get in touch with me at any time

May God bless you with His peace.

Mike

01564 793975

Romans 5:5

.... God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.