

April 2020

St John's Church

Welcoming - Worshipping - Loving - Growing



Jottings

Luther, J. John and Covid 19

There are lots of good articles out there reflecting on the Coronavirus. The following is an abridged version of a J. John article which I hope you'll find helpful.

"I imagine I'm not alone in feeling that I have been mysteriously pushed through the doors of some magical wardrobe and find myself gazing around a strange, unwelcoming landscape. It is definitely not C.S. Lewis's Narnia; this hostile desert – which I take the opportunity of naming Covidia – is much more alien and daunting. Yet the door is closed behind us and, to use the old words of the King James Bible, you and I find ourselves 'strangers in a strange land' (Exodus 2:22). What we face is threatening and even frightening. Nevertheless, I'm comforted by the fact that many of the followers of Jesus have trod this path before. Although we find the present COVID-19 pandemic unusual, it's worth remembering that if you look back over history it was a rare generation that didn't have to grapple with such things as the Black Death, plague, cholera or the like. Other men and women of faith have crossed this discouraging landscape before us.

One man who did is the great reformer Martin Luther. In 1527, at a time when bubonic plague was rampaging across Germany with many fatalities, he was asked the question as to whether it was right to run away from it. Luther expressed his own position like this:

'I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me. If my neighbour needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely.'

(PTO)

Let me offer you three wise principles that still hold.

Live Wisely

Luther intends adopting a strategy of what we would call self-isolation and, despite the passing of nearly 500 years, this remains good guidance: we should pay attention to the suggestions of medical experts and think of minimising the spread of the disease to us or to others. COVID-19 has claimed enough victims – try not to give it any more.

Live faithfully

We can no doubt identify with Luther praying for God's protection but Luther sees his whole life in the hands of God. Indeed, his perspective on death is helpful: he sees it not as an act of bitter tragedy or a demonic victory but simply as an event where God 'takes him'.

Underlying all the actions Luther intends to take is his deep faith in Christ.

Love richly

We ought to recognise that there is always a temptation to 'look after Number One' and self-isolation could heighten this. The question that Luther was addressing is whether someone in a position of church responsibility should flee from peril. Actually, in days of a global pandemic, fleeing disease makes little sense but the principle of being lovingly concerned for those around us remains completely valid.

With an ominous landscape before us I am reminded of the first few lines of that great Welsh hymn, 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer, Pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but thou art mighty; Hold me with thy powerful hand.' Here we have the greatest of encouragements. As we travel through this difficult time, we, who have put our faith in Christ, know that he travels alongside us. Jesus is Emmanuel, the one who is 'God with us' (Matthew 1:23). And in our harsh new world, that is the greatest comfort of all.

You can read the full article here: <https://canonjohn.com/2020/03/18/comfort-in-covidia/>

Please continue to pray, to look after yourselves and to support people in need. Regular updates are being sent via email and posted on Facebook. Using the telephone is also a helpful and safe way to stay in touch and support each other through this time. If you are in need of support then please get in touch.



KEEP IN TOUCH!

DO YOU NEED A HELPING HAND?

- Are you stuck at home and need a pint of milk or a few days shopping?
- Worried about what to do and need a friend to chat with?
- Need a prescription collecting from the pharmacy, a magazine or newspaper?
- Run out of something essential?
- Need someone to walk the dog or take the cat to the vets?

WE CAN HELP!

If you are safely at home because of the concern around Coronavirus. Worried about going out, but need a helping hand or someone to talk to? Just call Keep In Touch and one of our friendly volunteers will help you out. - **After all, that's what neighbours are for!**

We can deliver food, do a shop, drop and collect medicine or even walk your dog.
Call us on 07514114680 between 10 am and 3 pm Monday to Thursday.

Keep In Touch is for everyone in Weymouth and Portland during the Coronavirus and is run by Refresh and The Churches in Weymouth and Portland.



Florence is back in Weymouth

I am back in Weymouth after my daughter, Jo and I spent two months in Australia. It was precious time with my youngest daughter Elizabeth and her family. We saw for ourselves that all is well after the devastation the fires have left behind. God has heard our prayers and things are

returning to a natural state.

Thank you all so much for your prayers whilst we were away. My grandson, Jordan and Amanda's wedding went off very well and has left us with many memories. Jo and I were able to have a lovely 5 day break in Bali on the way back

to the UK. This is something I have always wanted to do.

Thank you Lord for all you do for us in this wonderful world You have provided for us. God bless you all.

Florence Ayres

Ladies Day at St. Aldhelm's 01.02.2020 (part 2) The Great Story

During her talk in the morning, Jo Soper of the Exeter Network Church encouraged us to think of ourselves as part of *The Great Story* which we read in the Bible. Like all good stories it has a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning is, of course, *Creation*; the end is *The Second Coming* and the middle, the body of the story, is what has been happening throughout history. We identified some of the major events in this story as *The Fall*, *Jesus' Ministry*, and *Pentecost*. There are many more.

Jo encouraged us to think of ourselves as part of this story as it continues towards its conclusion. The improvised drama we undertook illustrated our part in the story. In small groups we discussed individuals in the Bible whom God had 'put

on the spot.' Men and women whom God had challenged to step out of their comfort zone and achieve something miraculous. The response was often, "Who? Me? No, you've got the wrong person. I can't do this." But God always persisted and in the end resistance collapsed and in faith these ordinary human beings achieved miraculous deeds. We then created a time-line of who we had highlighted including Noah, Abraham, Gideon, Ruth, Esther, Hannah, Jonah, Mary and Joseph. The characters explained what had happened in their lives as a result of being chosen by God. We could have represented many more people including Moses, Elisha, Nehemiah, the list is endless! I am sure you have your favourite hero/heroine of the Bible.

Jo then challenged us to think of a time in our life when God has "put us on the spot" and we have achieved something we did not think we could. We are a part of this continuing story: we are all significant. In the prayer room we were asked to look into the mirror and acknowledge our place in the universe as a special child of God. We are all an active part of this great story and should take our place alongside all the other participants. How wonderful to think of ourselves as part of this great tradition of faith. We need the story but equally the story needs us!



Christine Clay

Food Bank Statistics for 2019

2019 was a very busy year for Weymouth Foodbank. Referrals increased by 5.8% of which a large proportion were families. In total 2239 adults and 1533 children were helped by Weymouth food Bank during the year. As a food parcel provides 3

meals a day for 3 day 33,948 meals were provided. Every single gift is received with gratefulness and prayer that every single giver will be blessed. Even though there are food shortages it is more

important than ever to donate food items. Although St John's is closed food bank items are still being collected. The green collection box is in **Tony and Diane Blackwell's porch. Please take any items to Tyneham, Little-moor Road, DT3 5PA.**

Congratulations to:-

Les Mould

who has a special birthday this month

From a disciple of Jesus by Francis Childs

I was there when they crucified my Lord.
Were You?

I was there when his trial was held.
That illegal trial, I argued against.

No time to sleep on it.
The quickly taken decision was hasty.
No time to reflect. No time to ponder on this man's life.
I queried the legality of the trial. This trial should never have taken place.
Space was needed to discuss amongst ourselves. The death penalty wasn't to be rushed.
That was never going to happen; tried on a Sabbath Eve.

We sat in a half circle, as if on a threshing floor.
Everyone could see each other, no mistake as to who spoke.
Yet I spoke in his defence as did one other.
We stood in turn to deliver our verdict; only two of us speaking 'innocent'.
So very outnumbered, outvoted, Nicodemus and I.

A majority for the capital offence, the death sentence passed.
With Romans to action the crucifixion; my Lord was bound and taken to Pilate.
No wonder Pilate washed his hands as the mob cried 'Crucify him'.
I saw.

I was there when my Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler:
'Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor'. I saw that young man just walk away.
But Jesus knew my heart.
Knew all my wealth was his.

He knew already what he required of me.
It was my position, my high standing that qualified me to seek an audience with Pilate.
I was empowered by my faith to ask permission to ask to remove the body.
My Lord, my Saviour was not going to be left.
Not to be left on the ground for birds to peck.

My wealth enabled me to purchase the finest linen grave clothes.
As for a brother, I gave him my garden tomb – fresh hewn.
Nicodemus and I reunited in our grief.
We had voted the same way.
Agreed this should never have happened.

We dressed and anointed this man from Nazareth.
Through our tears did we truly know this was the son of God?
In our grief we left.
We left him there.
The conviction wasn't even legal.

I wasn't there when the stone was rolled away.
I had no part in bribing the soldiers.
I took no part in their pay-off.
I wasn't there.

But he had found me once.
I would find him again.
We were not lost to each other.
My Lord, my Saviour, my Master and Rabbi but best of all a Friend to me
Joseph of Arimathea
