

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
12th May 2020**

READINGS

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

When we want to give up on God because we have lost our desire to pray and do not have a feeling of God's nearness, we need to remember that God understands us and accepts us in our sadness, which is part of the human condition. At these times, God says to us: "Keep believing in the greening, in the springtime of your hearts. I know that it feels as though I am far away from you, but I am closer to you than your next breath. On your weary days, just come and sit by the well of life with me and I will stay with you. On your discouraged days, remember that I yearn to fill your life with joy. It will return to you in time. On the days when you feel the ache will never go away, press your pain against me and know I surround you with an everlasting love. Draw strength and energy from me. I will sustain you in this wintry dark time."

Joyce Rapp

REFLECTION

“It’s a marathon not a sprint” said Health Secretary, Matt Hancock referring to the coronavirus and warning everyone that it would take the nation a long time to come out of the current situation, and now many weeks into lockdown, and with weeks still ahead (albeit, with a slight lifting of restriction), we can certainly agree that this is indeed a marathon!

At this stage many people are beginning to get a bit down with the repetitive nature of each day, or with the restrictions imposed or with the situation in general. There is a danger for many people that a form of despair can set in. For that reason, we are seeing ever more adverts with advice on how to cope with stress and with despair and depression during the lockdown.

Our readings this week remind us that perseverance has always been a part of faith. There has always been a realisation that faith does not mean always being on ‘cloud 9’. Instead, there are times when we are in the doldrums and the depths. But that is not a failure of faith. It does not mean that your faith is weak if you are beset with the darkness. Nor does it mean that God has forgotten about you or turned away from you.

Our reading from Deuteronomy tells of the appointment of Joshua by Moses, to take over leadership of the people of God. A daunting task to take over from the man who has led the people out of slavery, through 40 years in the desert, who has brought the 10 commandments from God, and guided the people through tough times. God’s promise to Joshua, is not that this will be an easy task for he will lead the people from the desert into the promised land, to make their space amongst peoples who will not welcome them. God’s promise to Joshua is simply that God will never leave Joshua nor forsake him.

The New Testament writers repeatedly refer to our need to persevere in our faith, to go on trusting, even in difficult circumstances. That call to persevere comes with the promise that God is with us at all times. And even when we do not feel able to pray, or able to believe, God never draws away from us, never gives up on us. God is always and forever “closer to you than your next breath”. God’s love, God’s care, God’s compassion, are yours to draw upon. And in these long days of isolation, God’s promise is still that he will never leave you nor forsake you.



Prayer

Eternal God,
Forever God,
God of the ages,
God who has shared the journey of life,
From earth's first turn
God who will be there at earth's last turn.
God who is always there,
God who never forsakes us,
We turn to you.

In long days of isolation,
Where choices are limited,
Where each day seems the same,
And the monotony wears on our hope,
Be our companion,
And remind us that you are near.

When we feel bored,
When life seems mundane,
When we feel too weary to pray,
When our faith feels dried up and barren,
Be our companion,
And remind us that you are near.

God who is near,
Eternal companion,
Make real in our lives
You promise never to forsake us.
Open our eyes to see your presence around us,
Open our ears to hear your words of hope,
Open our lives to receive your blessing and your peace.

In Jesus's name
Amen

