

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
19th May 2020

READINGS

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Psalm 139:13-18

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39

Long before any human being saw us, we are seen by God's loving eyes. Long before anyone heard us cry or laugh, we are heard by our God who is all ears for us. Long before any person spoke to us in this world, we are spoken to by the voice of eternal love. Our preciousness, uniqueness and individuality are not given to us by those who meet us in clock time – our brief chronological existence – but by the one who has chosen us with an everlasting love, a love that existed from all eternity and will last through all eternity.

Henri Nouwen

REFLECTION

One of my favourite parts of the baptism service is that part where we acknowledge that each person is a new idea from God. Each of us unique, each of us special in our own way. Each of us capable of something which no one else can achieve. No two people exactly the same.

And as unique as we each are, all our readings this week reflect that God knows us better than anyone else, better even than we know ourselves. Not only that, but God loves each one of us completely. God has loved us from the beginning and will love us forever.

God is intimately involved in our lives, and all of our experiences of life, never take us beyond the love and the care of God in our lives. We are simply, now and forever, in the Father's eyes.

As we live through these days of COVID-19, of lock down and isolation, it can seem as if we are powerless. Restricted and controlled by a virus over which we have no power. The securities of old mean little. The debates which raged and things which seemed so vital, have become so much less important.

While everything else appears to have changed, the reality of our faith is just as strong as ever, the foundations on which we build our hope remain rooted deep, for God's love is unchanging, God's commitment to us is eternal. Virus or no virus, lock down or freedom of movement, on our own or in a crowd, God hears our every heartbeat and knows our every cry. And while every other security may fall, this truth remains forever true – God loves us.

And because God loves us, whether we feel at peace or restless, God is as close to us as our next breath just a prayer away. However you feel as you read this, know that you can turn to God and find comfort and peace and hope and rest and assurance.

Prayer

Eternal God,
Forever our heavenly Father,
We rejoice that your love never runs out,
And that you never turn away from us in disgust or frustration.

God of the beginning and the end,
You know what each of us is like,
You know what we are capable of,
You know our limitations,
So when we turn to you,
Help us to be honest with our feelings and fears,
Help us to be open about our needs and commitment.

As ready to listen to us as you are loving God,
We are not so good at hearing your call,
Or recognising your touch,
Sometimes Lord,
You have to make it really clear to us that you are there!
May we learn to trust in the certainty of your care for us
and find peace in the guarantee of your nearness.

In this time,
We remember all who suffer from illness,
We remember those mourning for loved ones gone.
We remember with thankfulness the gifts and skills and courage of frontline workers,
We remember all who are concerned for jobs and business and the future,
We remember those isolated and feeling so alone,
Desperate for human contact but afraid to get close.
Eternally loving God,
We commit them all into your care,
Praying for their safety and their wellbeing.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

