

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
2nd June 2020

READINGS

Israel, the LORD who created you says,
"Do not be afraid—I will save you.
I have called you by name—you are mine.
When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you;
your troubles will not overwhelm you.
When you pass through fire, you will not be burned;
the hard trials that come will not hurt you.
For I am the LORD your God,
the holy God of Israel, who saves you.

Isaiah 43:1-3

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

Matthew 6:25-27

"It was cold, down at the nature reserve. The sky was steel grey, clouds torn by an almost gale force wind. It ripped through the trees, scattering the last leaves. A great armada of Canada geese was in the water, together with dozens of other waterbirds. They all floated there, facing into the storm. Their environment had suddenly become hostile, threatening. They didn't protest or run for cover. They didn't use up precious energy flying into it, or fighting it. They faced into the wind, paddling quietly. They didn't try to make headway, but paddled just enough to keep their direction and position in the water. Maybe we could learn from the birds. Jesus thought so. They tell us of God's concern, he said, and remind us that we achieve little by worrying. When the going gets tough, the tough get going, says the cliché. I'm not sure that's always the best way. We're not all as aggressive as that suggests. Another way is just to face the storm, and keep position. Not scream and shout, not protest and ask what have I done to deserve this, but just hold on to faith and wait for the wind to blow itself out. It will, for the creator of the winds is stronger than the wind. It may take time, but it works, and I don't remember ever seeing a Canada goose with acute depression."

Eddie Askew "Face the Storm"



REFLECTION

Eddie Askew's reading which I have used for our devotions this week is one of my favourites. The geese in his story get through the storm by doing nothing dramatic. They simply face the storm and do what is necessary to hold their position, using the least energy possible, so that after the storm they can progress with life as normal. We can certainly learn from that. How often in times of stress and difficulty we run around desperate to solve things and expend all our energies with little success. We end up drained and feeling as if we have failed to achieve anything.

As the lock down continues, albeit with some degree of easing, the reality is that it will still be many weeks before we have a sense of normality and certainly months before we will be back worshipping as the church together. How do we deal with that? We face the reality. This is how things are and we can do little to change that. We face the storm.

As we persevere, we can see that God's promises to us have not changed. God's love for us is as strong as ever. God's care for us has not wavered. God's purposes are not thwarted. God's word abounds. God's goodness remains before us. It has been amazing to see how the church has found new ways to communicate, how folk have been able to see the worship and the praise and the care of God's people in action.

So we face the storm. We face the storm knowing that it will not last. There will be life after COVID-19. The church will be there. God's will be there. The message will be there, for God says to each of us, "When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; trouble will not overwhelm you" Isaiah 43:2

PRAYER

Lord God,
All around us we see evidence of your love in action,
If only we will look for it.
But, too often, we are caught up in our own thoughts,
Our own strivings, our own needs and wants,
And we do not see the ordinary miracles of hope and love you offer us.
We so too busy trying to force things to our way of living,
That we can hear the songs of promise and peace you sound out to us.
Like the geese,
We need to learn to face the storm calmly.
So Loving God,
Teach us this week to slow down,
To be still
Lead us to your peace,
To that place,
Where even in the most difficult of times,
We can have faith because we know you are with us.
In Jesus name
Amen.

