

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
18th August 2020**

READINGS

Don't be afraid, because I am with you.
I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.
I will tell the north: Give my people to me.
I will tell the south: Don't keep my people in prison.
Bring my sons from far away and my daughters from faraway places.
Bring to me all the people who are mine, whom I made for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

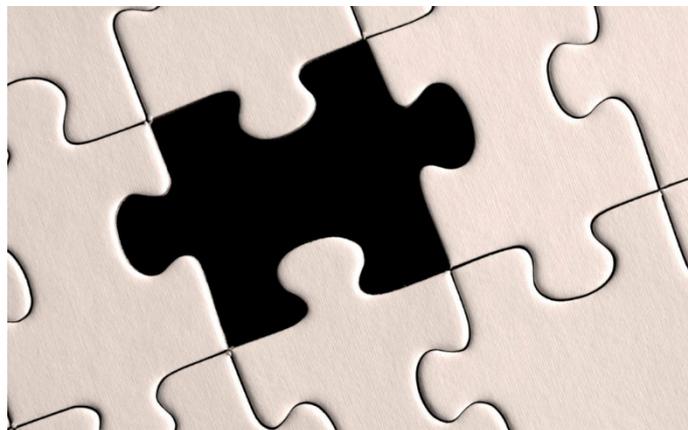
Isaiah 43 :5-7 (New Century Version)

Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other.

2 Corinthians 5:16-18 (The Message Translation)

There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each one of us which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.

Blaise Pascal



REFLECTION

What does it take to make you feel fulfilled? Is it achieving your ambitions? Is it the house you always desired? Is it being financially secure? Is it having public acclaim and people looking up to you? Is it the perfect family? Is it a successful career?

All of those things (and many others) are ways that people try to resolve the question of finding fulfilment. But do they satisfy? Do they live up to expectations? I am not so sure that they do? Of course, such things might make life a bit easier to live. They might give direction and purpose for a time. But do they really satisfy?

Something so dramatic as the global pandemic we are experiencing reminds us that so many of the things that we build our lives upon are unstable and unreliable. Money, success, contentment, security can all be taken from us in an instant.

Our readings this week point us to a greater reality. That we are a created people and that our creation and our lives have a purpose. That purpose is relationship with God. That's the missing piece from every life. When we realise and respond to God's love, when we can call God friend and saviour and eternal parent, then we discover a fulfilment that cannot be taken away from us. No global pandemic can separate us from God's love. No event in life can change the fact that we are God's people and that God loves us. We can lose everything else, but God will never give up on us. God's love for us is not dependant on us. God's love is not dependent on what we do or say or achieve. God's love is not dependent on what we look like or where we live. God's love is dependent on God, and as such is unshakeable.

There is nothing wrong with all of those other aims and goals – they are not in themselves evil or corrupt – but for so many people they take the place that rightly belongs to God. But they hold none of the hope of God, none of the love of God, none of the promise of God. They are but pale reflections of the greater peace, the greater meaning, the great joy the greater fulfilment that God offers to us.

So ask yourself, what matters most to you? How stable are the things that you rely on?

PRAYER

Lord our God,
Saviour, friend,
Hope above hope
Meaning beyond ordinary things;
we put our trust in you,
For you alone give purpose and joy unabridged;
You alone give life its reason and its fulfilment.

Oh Lord,
You know us so well,
You know is easy for us to get distracted
Easy to get drawn in by the priorities and obsessions of the world around us,
Easy to be lured by the sparkle of ordinary things like wealth and success and popularity,
Even when we know that such things offer no lasting peace, no lasting joy.

Forgive us when our eyes have been turned
And our focus shifted from you.

Precious God,
Remind us of the joy of living faith,
Remind us of the wonder of being your family,
Remind us of the blessing of knowing we are your beloved children,

In Jesus name,
Amen.

