

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
23rd February 2021**

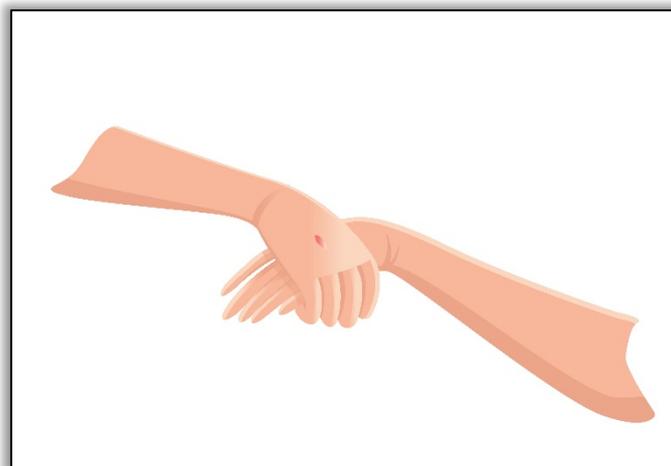
READINGS

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 139: 7-12

Jesus said:
"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;
no one will snatch them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all;
no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

John 10:27-29



REFLECTION

I read somewhere the other day a helpful slogan for these days of lockdown:

“Hold on, the light is coming. Hold on, it will all be OK soon.”

Helpful words, inspiring words. “I must remember that!”, I told myself.

But the more I think about those words “Hold on”, the more I realise that as Christians we have a different kind of hope, we have a different kind of future to look forward to. For it's not so much that we have to “hold on” rather, the Christian promise is that, no matter what happens in life, we are held onto.

The idea of holding on sounds good, but it relies completely on ‘me’. I have to hold on. But what happens when my strength grows weary? What happens when life seems too sad? What happens when I just don't think that I can hold on any longer?

The Christian faith does not promise that we will always have the strength to hold on. The Christian faith at its' heart has the promise that God cares for us and will never let go of us.

So, for the Christian, It's not guaranteed that we will not have tough times just because we have faith. Instead, when we are too sad, when we are too tired, when we feel too broken and too weary, when we do not know how we will keep going, then we do not have to rely on our own strength, for we are held in God's care. And God who holds us is the Creator, the Almighty, whose strength will never run out, who is greater than even the most desperate of circumstances. God will never stop holding on to you.

However you are feeling today, remember that you don't face this day alone. You are held onto. Grasped by the one whose love for you is immeasurable. Clapsed in a grip of love that is stronger than anything that can happen to us.

PRAYER

Loving God,
In these troubled days of uncertainty
Remind us that, however unsure we feel about the world
around us,
We are never out of your sight,
Never beyond the call of your voice,
And never out with the grasp of your love.

Inspire us to trust,
To hope, to live looking forward,
Knowing that we are secure always in you.

Help us to share our hope with others,
To spread the Good news of your loving care.

In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.



Hope Gatherings – Wednesdays in February (Week Four)

We continue to meet on Wednesday nights at 7:30 (Virtual Vestry from 7-7:30 p.m.) throughout February to discuss how we can get through this latest lockdown and thrive in this time of isolation. We will discuss different themes as we move through the month that will help us to better cope with what is before us. This week we will carry on from last week's theme and conclude our study by exploring the meaning we have found within this difficult time. We will spend some time reading about hope, meaning and new beginnings in the Scriptures and we will pray together.

1. **When we are able to find meaning in negative events and adjust to changes in positive ways, we increase our own resiliency.** We have often felt helpless and out of control during this pandemic (which is normal!), but these emotions can lead us to despair and hopelessness if we do not find meaning within them. Finding meaning in our lives increases our self-worth and sense of well-being. Meaning can be a buffer against negative thinking, despondency, and negative behaviours that damage our self-image. We are valuable to God, and every experience we go through has meaning and lessons to teach us. Let us open our eyes and ears to hear his still, quiet voice sharing with us insights about God, ourselves, others, and the world in this challenging time.
2. **We can find meaning in life in the following ways:**
 - a. **Felt senses:** A shared sense of meaning in life among the community. What shared experiences have we all been through? What will you remember going forward? There is worth in our shared experiences, and they bond us together.
 - b. **Matter and significance:** In what way have you made a difference to others around you? You have made your mark on this time, and you have made a difference to the people and community that you serve and which impacts you.
 - c. **Purpose, goals, and engagement:** What goals have you set, and what do you hope to accomplish in the near future when this pandemic has ended? You can commit to being engaged in the activities you choose to practice. You can focus on what you can work on in times of uncertainty. You can develop your hobbies, volunteering, job, relationships, etc.
 - d. **Coherence:** How have you made sense of what you have gone through during the past year of the pandemic? Have you grown, and have you learned new insights about yourself?
 - e. **Reflection:** Looking at the four areas above you begin to answer the questions of meaning and how you fit in this world. What do you want to take away with you out of this difficult time? What have you had to let go of or grieve? What have you embraced more of in your life?
3. **Look to the future.** The more we move beyond this time of uncertainty and darkness, the easier it becomes to be bogged down again in the tyranny of the urgent. Before that happens, take time to think of what is ahead. Wonder about what the world will be like in a year or two? What new opportunities will there be, and what challenges might still remain? Allow yourself to dream again. Pray through areas of personal, professional, relational, and spiritual growth that God might be showing you.
4. **Make meaning with others.** As we come closer to the end of our lockdown and restrictions remember that meaning is not just about self-reflection, but it is also owned by the group. Take time to talk with others about what you have learned and what you have experienced. Reconnect with friends you have

lost track of over the years. Reach out to people in church that you miss having a cuppa and biscuits with after worship. Set up some Zoom conversations, write a few letters and make a few phone calls. Spend additional time in prayer and reflection, reading Scripture and listening to God's voice. Pretty soon our days will be filled again. Let's make space for others and for God now so that when we become busy again (and you know that will happen), we will have developed these places of meaning with others and flexed these muscles enough that we will keep these relationships strong.

Adapted from: <https://lernercenter.syr.edu/2020/05/04/making-meaning-during-coronavirus/>

Meanwhile, plan to come out on Wednesday night to discuss your thoughts on navigating this recent lockdown and how we might help each other to negotiate it. We will hear Scripture and spend time in prayer too! To enter the Virtual Vestry, go to the church's website (southholburn.org) and scroll down for the Zoom Meeting link. Below are a few helpful resources you might want to check out.

nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/

bbrfoundation.org/blog/how-stay-mentally-healthy-amidst-covid-19-pandemic?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6t6ABhDMARIsAONiYw9zBiVBKegWyS-JktX5k-Yknn2JssIMjirGp