

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
13th April 2021

READINGS

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
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 139:1-12

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ in my home, Christ in my travels
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

St Patrick, from the Book of Armagh

REFLECTION

Over these weeks and months of lockdown we have been confined to our houses and flats - the places where we live. The welcome news is that restrictions will continue to ease, and we will have more freedoms to leave home, to go to other places to meet more people outside. Looking forward, we have the promise of times ahead later in the year when we will be able to visit others in their home and once more invite people into our homes. Who is it you are most looking forward to visiting in their homes? Who is it you are most looking forward into inviting into your home? For many these times of confinement may well have changed how we think of home, so what does that space we call home mean to us now?

When you look at the life and ministry of Jesus you can see the effect that his experience of home had upon him as he was growing up.

The priorities and routines of the household wove themselves into the lives of Mary and Joseph's growing family. Jesus would have seen his mother rise at dawn each day to make the bread which was every family's staple food. He would have watched his mother and sisters fetch water, trudging with monotonous regularity to the well and back. As he grew stronger, he would have helped his father in the workshop and learned about handling wood: his grown-up parable about planks of wood and splinters in the eye may well have sprung from painful experience!

The daily life of his own home was intertwined with the lives of his neighbours, which were ruled by the seasonal demands of agriculture. He would have seen the farmers sowing their seed by hand, casting it into the ploughed soil and praying it would take root and thrive. As he and his brothers played in the fields they would see the tender shoots of young wheat grow, he would have come to understand the vital connection between the growing seeds and the food in his belly. He may have helped with the harvest, choked on the dust thrown up by threshing and winnowing, and joined in the general celebration of that year's crop safely gathered in.

As he walked in the countryside around Nazareth, he would have seen shepherds with sheep and goats, driving the goats from behind and leading their sheep from the front, watching over their flocks, caring for the sick lambs and chasing the wayward ones back into the fold.

All of those experiences are found in the words and actions of Jesus. His home life had a deep and profound effect upon him, and upon his understanding of the God's interaction in our lives.

None of this should be a surprise. As our reading from St Patrick this week reminds us, God is at work everywhere. God is wherever we are, and just as Jesus' home was a deep influence upon his expression of faith, so too your home is so much more than a building, so much more than a house, so much more than a piece of property, instead, is a place where God works in your life, where you encounter God every day.

As we begin to move out of lockdown, think about the space you call home. What does it mean to you? What one thing that sums up home for you? Is there one item that symbolise home more than other? What does it mean to you to remember that home is a place where God is with you?

PRAYER

Lord of Life,
who came as one of us and lived in a humble place,
among homely things and ordinary people.
Thank you from the promise that you are always there with us,
In every experience and every place.

We bring before you the homes we know:
where we may be ourselves,
most loved or most understood.
We remember that homes can also be places where the most hurt is caused,
where people are most misunderstood.

Loving Lord,
bless our homes.
May they be places of love and hospitality,
warmth and comfort,
nurture and growth,
creativity and inspiration.
May your light shine in the heart of each home,
spreading its radiance into the world.

In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.

