

Wrigton & Lynch Chapels

Minister's Website Article November 2020

Many of you know I have been ill over the last fortnight - coughing, sweating, shivering, and feeling rough. My voice seems to be my weakest point: I'm struggling to be heard above a whisper. Thank you to those who prayed and offered words of encouragement.

That said, it made me think. At face value, it seems a disaster. I can't preach and minister, and our churches are locked down for another month. I'm sure you're disappointed - especially folk at Lynch who have only recently re-opened in a socially distanced way. I'm sure lots of you have gone to God and asked 'Why?'

I did that. But it's dangerous for ministers. I knelt and whispered, 'Lord, why are you doing this to your church?' Immediately God said, 'Listen to your own sermon.' You see, I preached on 1st November (a pre-recorded sermon made before I lost my voice) that faith is a gift from God, and that gift means we can trust God's heart to be right. No matter what happens, God is in the process. There are places where we have to say, 'Lord, I don't like it. But I trust you know what you're doing.' I'm in danger of repeating myself, but I really do think God is pulling his church into that place of utter trust.

I've been a minister for some years. I've listened to the same questions again and again - sometimes in anger, sometimes quietly: 'How could He? I've been good, faithful. I've read the Bible. I've prayed. How could he do this to me?'

I often don't know what to say. But the issue is not whether I have an answer. In many ways you don't need to know why. In fact, the Bible doesn't say much about why. If you go to the book of Job for answers, you'll be disappointed, because there aren't any. There's just discussion, at the end of which God says, 'Shut up! I'll tell you something important.' Job says, 'Whoops! I spoke a little hastily there.'

There aren't any easy answers. Not real ones. But, this is the place where we're all equal. Ministers, Elders, Deacons, Bishops, Bible teachers, can all get Covid too, it can be hard for them too, they have doubts too. They have sleepless nights too. Pray for the strong, for they are weak. We don't like it, do we? We shake our fists at God. But it makes us see the reality of the life we live.

We can learn a few tips from the Apostle Paul about this. The first is really good, so listen. Paul says, 'It's very hard to be spiritual. It's hard to be profound and rational and have it together:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8 verse 26)

See? Even Paul can feel like that. Yes, some people will say, 'It was hard, but Jesus came, and I felt at peace.' You visit them in hospital and ask, 'How are you doing?' They say, 'Fine. Jesus is here. It's rough, but I'm doing okay.' I'm not sure I can do that all the time. God needs to keep working on me. I sometimes want to say, 'God's on holiday, and I don't feel close to him. I don't feel peace at all.' That's probably true for most of us. When I'm scared, in a panic and it hurts, I don't hear God well. Maybe later, but not during.

Back, then, to the sermon. I truly believe God is forcing his church to leave behind all those other things we lean on - money, buildings, traditions, ritual, and so on. He's causing us to say, 'Lord, give me faith so that I trust in you, no matter what happens.' The important place for church then is to support each other in that discovery of faith.

Every blessing

Duncan