

God's call at the time of COVID-19

Michael Harvey. November 15th 2020.

1 Cor3: 5-9; and John 20 v19-26

Michael has provided his preaching notes, from his sermon. They are below.

A week later his disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and said Peace be with you. (v26)

What is Gods call at this time?

Whisper it but Jesus has not been made redundant

Jesus is exempt from the two guests to a home rule

2 people meeting outside can still experience the presence of Jesus

During Covid-19 restrictions Jesus has been entering homes

Being in lockdown has never stopped Jesus

Ask the disciples

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them

And said Peace be with you

Can you imagine how those disciples were feeling at the time?

They had just experienced the death of their friend

And they felt unsafe

The virus of fear and anxiety had them locked into that room

They were self-isolating

And Jesus came

And injected peace

He brought peace to the anxious

As we all go through this global near death experience

Named the Coronavirus Pandemic, this has tapped into a deep fear that we are not in control because we feel powerless against a virus , to which you can exposed where you see no visible symptoms and because of this, people are considering different ways of living.

For many people they have moved from invulnerability to vulnerability.

People are going through a difficult time

Some are really struggling

Some need someone to talk

Many people in the general population are thinking about big questions.

Who am I when my job is taken away?

How much longer do I have to shield?

What is really important in life?

What is my place in the Universe?

Where am I going?

So many of us are worried about our families

I am hearing it from people who have young children

I am hearing it from people who have elderly parents

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them

And said Peace be with you

It is not just worry, anxiety and questions around identity

Some have lost loved ones

On 5th March the first death from Coronavirus was announced
a woman in her 70s at the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust.

Just 3 days before I was delivering the eulogy
for my younger brother Gary who had died
in the intensive care unit of the Royal Lancaster hospital
We as a family now know
what a privilege it was to be able to say goodbye
to a dad to a brother to a husband,
to an uncle to a friend
around the bed in that intensive care unit

Others did not have that privilege

Where is God when death of a loved one is the reality?

Questions

I had so many questions when watching my brother die

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them
And said Peace be with you

In the middle of all the uncertainty that surrounds us at this time

It is difficult for us to think of a better thing to do than pray

And it is difficult to think of a better prayer than

Lord today who do you want me to connect with outside the church family

This is based on John 5:19 I only do what I see the Father do

The government coined the phrase key-workers
in the early part of the pandemic,
nurses, doctors, teachers, supermarket workers
but could it be that hundreds of thousands of Christians
here in the uk and in the Netherlands
are the key workers at this stage of the pandemic?

We can be transformed into key workers
By praying the prayer "Lord today who do you want me to connect
With outside the church family?"

Who would I connect with?

Pray the prayer

How do I know that it is God speaking?

When someone comes to mind or when you notice someone, take a step of faith and find out...

During September and October, eight folk at All Saints, did a spiritual exercise.

They prayed Lord today is there someone God is nudging me to connect. Eight people over 2 weeks. We met three times. Those eight people were led to have God directed conversations with 27 people.

It reminds me of the verse we had read

"I Paul planted Apollos watered but it was God"

Eight people planted 27 God conversations. A lot of those conversations brought peace into an anxious situation

They asked seven other Christians to pray the prayer

We are key workers because God wants us

To offer hope to those in despair
To light where there is darkness
To offer joy where there is sadness
To offer peace where there is anxiety
Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them
And said Peace be with you

In fact Christians are rediscovering early church Christianity

which started in the home and in community
and the simple form of evangelism and sharing with a neighbour.

This is something I and others have been doing here in the uk

with encouraging outcomes over the past weeks –

using a simple approach I call **ACORN**.

It's a spiritual practice for such a time as this.

And a way to reach out when physical contact is not possible.

It is something I'm encouraging you and all of All Saints to do also.

A is for Ask: Each day simply and prayerfully ask God 'is there somebody I'm being nudged to connect with – to reach out to – today?'

C is for Call: This is God's response to our question. His 'call' is for us to respond to the name that may come immediately or later by way of a sense that this is his nudge to us.

O is for Obey: Our response may be through a phone call or any of the now well-recognised ways from Skype to Facetime to WhatsApp to SMS and more. The first step need be as simple as asking 'How are you doing?' and really listening to the answer.

And all the while remembering this conversation is as the result of what God has prompted to happen and being open to offering prayer either with them or for them.

R is for Report: Share with a Christian friend what God has done in this situation – even if it seems to be a very small step. Share what happened – much like the disciples reported back to Jesus when sent on mission.

N is for Notice God: Reflect on what God has done in and through us. In the past we may have been too busy to listen to God's voice and respond. But now, with God having our full attention, we may notice that God has used us and helped us grow in obedience and faith.

There are three notable things about acorns.

First, they need fertile soil to grow – and we now have this in our communities.

Second, though an acorn is small and seemingly insignificant, it can grow into something big and beautiful – with patience and care.

Thirdly Acorns fall in the Autumn each acorn can produce a new oak sapling the following spring. But most acorns become a rich food source

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And said Peace be with you.