Jesus is In the waiting

For most of us, we’re now 7 weeks into a lock down, and in reality, it looks like it could continue for quite some time if we are to make sure there is no second wave.

I think the rainy weather this week has had some impact on all of our moods, our ability and our attitude this week – or is that just me! I sense a level of irritability sweeping in as we fear a second wave and what that might mean.

With all of that in mind, over the next few weeks I thought we could look at ‘What do we do when there’s nothing you can do?’

What do you do when there’s no way forward and we are just waiting?

These are problems for which, at the moment, there are seemingly no solutions – where there are questions, but no answers.

It is what it is, and it looks like that’s just the way its going to be.

Our natural response is to think of and create options – and they are not always good options. We might want to ignore the advice given, we may want to go to bed for weeks on end, we might want to scream, give up, drink, become jealous of those that can come and go, and we might get resentful or angry.

We start to compare ourselves to others, and how they are coping. Everyone else appears to be coping better than you, doing the perfect home schooling, having the perfect family life and relationship with their partner – all things you were supposed to have and its just not happening!

And our brains tempt us to feel that ….

* I’ll never be free again
* The lock down is for ever
* What’s the point
* I’ll never be happy again…

So this week I want to confront the primary emotion people feel when facing a new normal – the emotion that makes us want to throw up, panic, and run. We feel like life is out of control and God has let go.

God though, has not let go. He is not absent, apathetic or angry with us. We are not being punished for our sin or someone else’s.

Understanding this, is really key if we are to win the battle going on in our minds and cope with more lockdown.

In these times we need to know that God cares, We need to know and feel his presence in the storm.

Because Sometimes – it just feels like he has left us.

Sometimes, we’re so intent on listening to the voices in our head that we don’t seek His voice….

Sometimes we are so convinced of the way God SHOULD help – that we can’t be still enough to listen to what He thinks about a situation.

There are many times in the Old and New testaments that God seemingly abandoned his favourite people. But that wasn’t the case… In fact, he was at work,

And that is true for us too.

God is always at work. He is always rooting for you – he hasn’t walked off in some huff or strop. He isn’t punishing us. That is not who he is.

In the book of Matthew – Jesus is in Galilee and had just finished giving his disciples instructions of how to go round doing ministry. He is on his way somewhere, and some of John the Baptist followers stop him to ask a question that John had given them to ask Jesus.

John wants to know ‘Are you really the Messiah, or is somebody else coming? Are we waiting on someone else”?

John can’t come and ask Jesus himself, because he is in prison for telling everyone that the Jewish King, Herod Antipas and his brother’s wife are committing adultery. So maybe he was sitting in Jail waiting for Jesus to come and sort it all out, waiting for the moment when his position as the Son of God would put him as the ruler of the Jews and John would be set free.

After all John and Jesus are linked, their Mothers are cousins, They had a good friendship and Jesus regularly praised John publicly – but he is still stuck in the prison. And Jesus did not even visit him, did not send him food, didn’t send angels to comfort him or get him out.

In fact, we read that when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee and LIVED in Capernaum…. So he actually went in the opposite direction- as far north as possible, leaving John alone in his prison cell.

When he sent the message to Jesus, John had been in prison for about 12 – 15 months, and probably getting fed up with nothing happening. Of waiting around for God to show up, do something and get things back to normal.

But it seems as though he doesn’t.

Jesus replies to Johns friends and says – ‘go and tell him about all of what is going on here – miracles, healings – basically - everything I’m doing for everyone else and not him!’

Maybe you are wondering what God is doing for you right now – when IS he going to show up and sort MY situation out.

And then Jesus adds ‘*blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me*.’

Maybe it’s a message for us during these Corona virus days as well as we stay at home, waiting, not doing much, hanging around.

Jesus is saying to John, and to us – don’t be offended, don’t trip up, don’t start sinning, don’t feel abandoned, because of what I am doing – it may not make sense, but stick with it – hold in there – and one day it will all make perfect sense.

Jesus says – don’t confuse my silence with absence.

We also see this action – or seemingly lack of action - with Jesus when he’s told that Lazarus is sick. Lazarus and Jesus were close friends, and yet on hearing that his good friend was ill – he stayed where he was.

Again the implication being that we shouldn’t confuse Gods absence for apathy. We wont always know his ways or his plans – but he is always there, doing what only he knows is best.

Now things turned out quite well in the end for Lazarus, and not so good for John the Baptist…. Things don’t always go the way our brains think – yearning for happy endings to everything!

Things didn’t turn out all that good for Jesus either – he didn’t shirk away from what he needed to do – because he knew what was best for everyone in the end. By going to the cross, God himself did battle with death and shows us through the resurrection that there are better days ahead – it will be alright in the very end…. We just need to hold on, to wait now.

When we don’t see God working how we want him to, or jumping to our every request, our minds start to do crazy things… we start listening to the lies that I mentioned earlier…. I’m not good enough, and that there is no point, and we compare ourselves to others and in that process we lose our **Joy**, our **hope** and our **purpose.**

When we feel that happening - this is the time to dig deep and realise what’s happening and put a stop to it. You have not been forgotten or abandoned by God. Your circumstances are just that - **circumstances**, they are not proof of the presence or absence of God.

So over the next few weeks, when you are tempted to listen to the lies, when staying in is getting to you, when you crave a hug, remember – You can be happy, Something good will come out of this pandemic, and your life does have purpose to it.

Focus on something that you can be grateful for, remember a time when God has been faithful – and believe that one day we will look back and see what God has been doing.

Maybe this is the first time that you are going to trust God and believe in Jesus. Maybe you’re ready to give him a chance to show you that he can be trusted. All you need to do is invite him in – say sorry for your unbelief and be still and listen…

It is a tough time. You will have bad days or bad weeks – it was a tough week for me this week and it is only with the grace and mercy of God that I have got through it and stayed sane. Well as sane as I can be.

We may not have the answers we want, we may not agree with political leaders decisions but we can choose our attitude and our behaviours. We can choose what we do trust.

For me I trust Jesus and because of that

I can choose to have Joy

I can choose to do something good

I can look to Jesus.

And friends – you can too.

And I know – Jesus has got it covered, he’s not surprised by what is happening and I can leave it as that.

So Stay safe everyone – get tin touch if you want to know how to make the next steps in your faith journey.

know that you are loved….and go in peace.

Amen

Rev. Tracey Ansell

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