

Pentecost Season: week 2: Frustration!

How can we cope?

There's a sense of frustration in this time of change, coming out of lockdown with much fear expressed; it's an unstable time, and confusing. The old life has gone; what will it be like in the future? Many are finding it hard to manage the change – about schools, about new guidance. And there's much bad news: George Floyd's suffocating death; the riots; the aggressive blaming in politics and in the news. It makes it hard to listen. And now – the weather! (We were so blessed before).

What does God have to say in a time like this?

It was for just such a time as this, it was for just such a people as us, that God came to earth, vulnerable, born in poverty in the frustration of the plans of Mary and Joseph; escaping as refugees; unknown until he was 30; then preaching the good news of Joy, love and peace.

The religious leaders were frustrated by his presence, his popularity, his truth; Jesus was frustrated by their stubborn refusal to believe, for 'they hated him without reason'. But he would not be swayed from his purpose, or his love for them; he gave his life for their sakes and overcame both death and evil, for the people of that time...and for the people of our time – yes, for us, in our weariness, our fears and our longings.

In him, and with his help, we *can* grow in inner peace and joy. For in him is hope, a hope that is sure, because it is everlasting.

Windows display rainbows, children's colourings, their symbol of hope. The Noah story is a relevant story, for it's about God's promises being true.

We can't understand why God allows this virus (if he does 'allow' this at all). Some think it is nature's push back at the way we have harmed the world with our pollution of air and plastics, our greed, our lack of concern for the starving and the poor. Can there be at least some good coming, if the air can be cleaner, and the seas less polluted? If we can truly love our neighbours in their needs?

Even if the sun does not shine, the Son does shine in our hearts.

It is our creed – even if only, "I believe in God!"

Pray for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit; because perseverance, however uncomfortable it is, builds up faith when we don't feel like being prayerful loving beings.

**"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning,
new every morning,
great is thy faithfulness, O Lord,
great is thy faithfulness."**

Lam 3: 23-24

Lamentations, quoted above, was Jeremiah's cry when Israel was exiled to Babylon, and Jerusalem left deserted. Though he mourned for his people, for the land, and for Jerusalem and the Temple, he came to the realisation that God's love would prevail, even when he could see devastation.

Additional info if you would like to read more:

The book of Job reveals how frustrated and angry Job was with God at all the suffering that he went through.

It was made worse by his friends who insisted he must be a great sinner to have suffered so much.

It's a fascinating story of how Job argued and railed at God, and how God finally vindicated him and restored him, and censured those that had accused him of wrong-doing.

This is an ancient book of wisdom, that dealt with the problem of suffering. It was a problem for people then, as it is now.

The reading for this week: Mt 9: 35 to the end:

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Please pray for more workers to gather in the harvest!

A prayer:

Lord God, we cry out to you in our frustration;
lend your ear to our prayers.

We appeal to you for your intervention;
for ourselves, our nation and our world.

Hear our prayer, soothe our fears, grow our patience, and
our perseverance, give us the stamina and the grace,
give us your love to sustain us,
your joy to refresh us, and your peace to secure us. Amen

Please also pray for our parish church councils meeting to discuss

- the future plans of the benefice,
- the possibilities of opening the churches for private prayer,
- how we can cope financially while we don't have any face-to-face services.
- and repairs to all our churches.

Thank you.

As soon as some churches are open, we will let you know by notices on the gates or doors, or online.

About Racism. A well-known theologian has explained that racism is embedded deep in our society; so it's important to know the history of it. We almost don't notice it. The message of Christianity is not that "we believe in Christ, so heaven is our destination and we are safe." That's what Plato, the philosopher proposed thousands of years ago, so that way of thinking is Platonism.

It is that we believe in Christ, and so we have become his new creation; therefore our old ways of doing things are gone, the old ways of our culture too; (and we need to recognise them); we have a new life, putting our Christianity into practice in prayer and worship, and in listening to other voices, – and - in putting right the inequalities in our society. It's not enough to sit in our own bubble, safe in our Christian belief; action is also required. If you'd like to know more, this video is very watchable, as the presenter, Tom Wright puts it well. It's 40 mins long, so make a coffee first! Here it is:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwohWaJHO0&feature=youtu.be

I hope you are all well. I do miss you and hope we can soon be together again. Keep strong. I am praying for you every day. Do ring and chat if you wish, and I will be happy to talk with you.

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