

Reflection for 21st July

Profit and Loss

Last week Elaine challenged us to consider what we had lost and what we had gained during lockdown.

My lost list was very short: I lost the physical coming to church on a Sunday, meeting face to face with my close family, having friends in the house once in a while. And that was it.

On the gain side I had far more time to spend in the garden or on other hobbies, I could chat more frequently with friends far and near on the internet, I actually saw more of my family on Facebook and through Face Time and Zoom than I had before lockdown. and family and friends checked far more frequently to see if I was OK. And I had more time to read and pray.

And so we come to Philippians 3, v. 7-8 where Paul says “Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to this surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”

For those who have been shielding it must have been much harder than for those of us who were merely self isolating. Those in essential work sometimes had to keep away from their families to protect them; some had to spend longer hours on the job with less opportunities for comfort breaks of various kinds; some gave up their own freedom to care for frailer family members.

But where do we put these things on the profit and loss accounts of our lives? Are they essential or more like the window dressing shop keepers use to appear more attractive to potential customers? Out of small losses we have gained much. We have reached people with the message of God’s love in Christ through the internet whom we could never have reached in the “normal” way; we have become more aware of the responsibilities and hard work of those in our ministry teams; of those in the NHS and other services which we had previously so often taken for granted; we have prayed more and interceded more and spent more time studying our Bibles.

Now we are slowly coming out of lockdown. How many of these gains shall we keep? How long shall we go on appreciating those people and things we used to take for granted?

In the same chapter Paul had these words: “Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.”

As we come slowly out of lockdown we need to preserve the goods we have gained and stop being so nostalgic about the things that are past; growth and change go hand in hand; we must look forward in faith, look forward in hope and accept what becomes the new normal in the knowledge that “here we have no continuing city” but seek that which is to come.

This day falls between the festivals of St. Margaret of Antioch and St. Mary Magdalene – two very different ladies who shared the same undying faith in their risen Lord. One we know died young as a martyr, the other as far as we know lived out a normal life and died of natural causes. Their challenge to us is ultimately the same: to live out our lives in whatever state we are called to in faith and hope of that certain resurrection to eternal life which is ours in Christ.

May you all know God’s blessings in your own lives this week.