

Reflection for Friday 26th June 2020

Three months ago we went into Lockdown....

Just before complete Lockdown, St Mary's was open for Private Prayer. We produced Prayer cards for everyone, for each day of the week. It wasn't long before we had to shut the church altogether. Then an appointed person who lived closeby was given permission to go in each day to say Prayers and I've been doing that and ringing the bell around noon. As I write, we are putting the final preparations in place to reopen St Mary's for Private Prayer, on the road back to being allowed Gatherings in church or outside on the Green.

The Prayer card reading for Fridays was from Luke chapter 12: **"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear"**.

In Lockdown we've been supporting everyone we can in life and those in the trauma and tragedy of loss and death. In November I plan the Annual All Saintside service will definitely include a celebration of life focus, for those who haven't had the chance to give thanks together in the way they'd hoped for those they have lost.



Earlier in the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus's Message and Ministry said: **"The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same"**.

Through generous donations we've been trying to help feed and clothe those who are struggling, particularly young families.

And this reminder of the worth of every living being **"Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!"**

That's a message that we need to hear, but to take hold of too. For the Carers and the Cared for; for those concerned about coming out from shielding; for those who have felt ill and alone in isolation and those who have felt released and relieved....God cares and the evidence of that is through the hands and feet of the people who reach out to others for Him.

There are many things beyond our control and our understanding which are challenging. There are many things to celebrate and, in helping others, we can find we feel closer to God himself and a blessing comes back to us. So, if we took time, what would we put on the list of things to give thanks for and celebrate from the last three months of life?



For a community to flourish it needs to be made up of flourishing individuals. Where I was last Vicar, we had one word that captured the Celebration of Life in a challenging community. The word is **HOPE**. And we described it like this:

- H** Healing and Wholeness from brokenness
- O** Opportunities out of challenges
- P** Prayer that leads to action
- E** Encouragement and enterprise for all

Hope is what many in economic difficulties need and hope is based on trust, in what you cannot see but for which you choose to have faith. The psalm verse that captured that then was Psalm 33: 22:

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

Whatever our circumstances, if we're reading this, we have the gift of life today. We have hope in a God who cares and who relies on us to be his carriers of hope to others.

Let me remind you of the Prayer prompts on the Friday card for:

- Our churches and places of worship responding to the guidelines now in place for meeting
- All those considering postponing weddings and baptisms
- All those who cannot travel to meet family and friends
- And the last one....hope for us all through caring for each other: Community groups finding different ways of keeping in touch to support each other

Through our pastoral buddy system, the phone call, the text or the email....when we can't touch each other, God can bring **HOPE** and his loving presence closer, through our prayer and our care.

