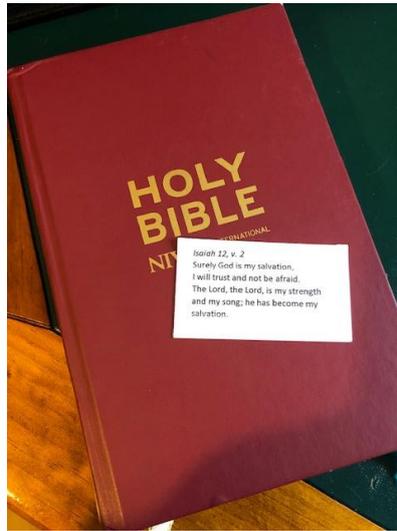


Looking Godward



Historically, part of the healing ministry we have at St. Mary's is a practice of giving out scripture verses – “blessing verses” after communion has been given together with individual prayers for anyone who would like it. These little verses have been a real blessing for me to receive, along with the prayer. They often cut through the busyness of my mind to help me focus on discerning God's purpose for the day, or in answer to prayer or to raise a question in light of something.

We have not been able to do that this year. When we have been able to hold services with worshippers present, our practices have had to change in order to minimise contact and keep everyone as safe as possible. I have missed that, but I am held by the knowledge that we are all praying for each other through these difficult times.

I was hunting around for something in my study the other day and I found one of these little verses tucked away. It had fallen between some paperwork and popped up with the following verse to bring me God's message as I needed to hear it on that day, 2 days before Christmas. Still in Advent and wondering how on earth we will get through it...

Isaiah 12. V2

Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord. The Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

It was a blessing all over again It got me thinking about how we read and use God's word in scripture and how much of a comfort the Bible can be to me in difficult times, and a place of joy in good times.

If you are like me you may search through the Bible for a suitable passage to speak into a situation, or to find words of God's comfort to send to someone. Sometimes, when I am at a loss, I find myself opening the sacred book and just hoping for the best.

This is what it feels like right now. We are heading towards the new year with a high degree of anxiety and uncertainty. So what are we searching for as we have come through Advent and celebrated the birth of Jesus and now we are on another uncertain journey into 2021? Where is God in all of this. And what do we want from Him right now?

We don't know.

We don't know what we are looking for in the One who loves us.

Are we looking for quick fix?

Are we looking for lessons learned?

Are we looking for a new beginning? A new way of living? A new way of loving?

Whatever we are searching for, we have to remember that it keeps us looking Godward. The hope is in that although we may be in a state of confusion, we are still oriented towards the One who knows, who sees, who loves us.

Our faith tells us the God has it.

And in hope we pray.

Sometimes prayer, alongside action, is the least we can do. Some days it is most we can do. Other times it is the only thing we can do.

As we approach this new year, we move somewhat haltingly, but let us, though apart, move together as a community with hope and purpose. Looking Godward.

Let us find times to sit with God's word in the Bible, in whatever way we read it. Let us look for discernment, encouragement and hope that is so rich in the familiar passages of scripture.

And in hope let us pray.