

Dear Friends

As I write this we are in troubled times; national borders closed, European streets cleared, people self-isolating and many feeling anxious about what has happened, is happening, will happen.

We have faced terrible things before, as members of the human race...the fear of the plague, the terror of the blitz, the horror of the holocaust - but this is different, this is US, and this is NOW. The Archbishops have instructed us to insist on hand washing, offer Eucharist only in the form of the wafer, ceasing offering one another the peace, and no longer ministering a laying on of hands as a blessing. For many it feels like dark days...

I was thinking of one of my favourite books as a child, and the feelings of fear, loss and insecurity which I experienced whilst reading one chapter. I wonder if you remember reading it too? ...

*'I wonder could we untie him?' Said Susan presently. But the enemies out of pure spitefulness had drawn the cords so tight that the girls could make nothing of the knots.*

I hope no one who reads this book has been quite as miserable as Susan and Lucy were that night; but if you have been - if you've been up all night and cried till you have no more tears left in you - you will know that there comes in the end a sort of quietness. You feel as if nothing was ever going to happen again. At any rate that was how it felt to those two. Hours and hours seemed to go by in this dead calm, and they hardly noticed that they were getting colder. But at last Lucy noticed two things. One was that the sky on the east side of the hill was a little less dark than it had been an hour ago. The other was some tiny movement going on in the grass at her feet.

If you are unfamiliar with CS Lewis *'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*, then I will not spoil it for you. But out of that dark waiting time comes hope and the offer of something new.

We are in the last few days of Lent, with the pain, loss, agony and then the wonderful joy of Easter all still to come, and it feels very poignant this year. The experts in public health are warning that

COVID -19 may well peak in the UK over Easter, adding to the dark waiting time.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when Jesus was put on the cross. At noon, a strange darkness blotted out the fierce brightness of the sun. Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, 'it is finished!' And gave up his life.

But the Gospel news is that God did not abandon his son on the Cross, and he does not abandon us in our loss and fear. Little by little the sky grows less dark, and signs of hope reappear, often slightly different from before, but still offering new life, and hope and joy.

The truth is that we cannot get to the resurrection joy, without the agony and loss of Good Friday, and right now globally we cannot get beyond this international virus without it changing the world significantly. We have to feel the pain, experience the hurt, look loss in the eye.

We are not certain where this virus really came from, but it's a wake up call about good housekeeping on a global scale. It's more than fighting climate change. It's about being good stewards looking after creation and that means looking after each other too. We are as a planet in this together. Our prayers are for each other, transporting us beyond national borders, racial tribes, or generational groups. We have to follow the guidance given, but not loose heart, hold on to the faith of Christ crucified and gloriously resurrected.

*Jesus lives! Our hearts know well  
Nought from us his love shall sever;  
Life, nor death, nor powers of hell,  
Part us now from Christ for ever:  
Alleluia!*

God bless you and yours, as we keep each other in our prayers each day.

With love,

*Andrew*