

Lord, be our shepherd, and keep us safe;
watch over us by day and by night, and keep us safe;
draw us together as a church and community,
and keep us safe.
Amen.



Roman Road I.M. Church
Failsworth

Sunday 3rd May

"So that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you "

Dear Family.

We are in difficult times and most of us are in lockdown obeying instructions to keep safe. The title to Matthew chapter 6 reads GIVING TO THE NEEDY, and our Lord reminds us we don't need to have our good works televised as it were.

I thought about all the folks in the NHS everyone of them from surgeon, nurse, doctor, lab worker, cleaner, those preparing food - everyone laying their life on the line for you and me.

500 years BC a general named Thucydides wrote these words, "The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet not withstanding, go out and meet it" No wonder we go out and clap for them every Thursday. Continue to pray for them all.

There are others giving to us, yes you and I, our sons, daughters and family friends, phoning to make sure we are okay and have our food list ready so they can shop for us, what would we do without them? Why do they do this? It's because they love us and care for us. They won't receive a fanfare or medal; the kindness they show is because they love us, noted by our Heavenly Father.

What about us, what can we give? We give our love and our prayers for them helping us through this time. John 14v1 says this

the words from Jesus Himself, "DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED, TRUST IN GOD, TRUST ALSO IN ME" There can be no fear with the Lord by our side. We cannot see this enemy, only its effect and that is a worry if we let it.

I finish with a true story from way back in 1141 in Germany in the middle ages. Wolf the Duke of Bavaria trapped in his castle in Weinsberg in lockdown surrounded by his enemies, the armies of Emperor Konrad and Duke Fredrick of Swabia. The siege had lasted for a very long time, messengers had gone to and fro for many months finally Wolf decided to give themselves up to their bitter enemy.

Inside the castle the wives of Weinsberg were not ready to give up everything. They sent a message to the Emperor asking safe conduct for all the women and asked if they could come out with as many valuables as they could carry in their arms. The request was granted the castle gates opened, out came the ladies, but in a startling fashion. They carried not gold or valuables each one was bending under the weight of her husband hoping to save him from the victorious enemy winner. It is said Emperor Konrad was brought to tears by this extraordinary show of love. He invited a great banquet to be prepared and there was peace.



As for us keep trusting keep praying, Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:
"LOVE IS THE ONLY GOLD"

GOD BLESS KEEP SAFE.

Jean Tavener

Pause for Thought from Radio 2's Paul Kerensa shared by The Bible Society

As a comedian, I sometimes wonder if I look for irony or it looks for me. Those 'God-incidences' (I wish that was a less clunky word) crop up so often, at times life sounds stranger than fiction.

On that wretched day at the start of this crisis – that moment when the penny dropped and the rug was pulled from our comfortable world – I turned to the Bible for comfort. I was (and still am) reading The One Year Chronological Bible, New Living Translation, but was a little behind. So, in mid-March, on the day of an effective lockdown, when my diary emptied and my mental health took its biggest tumble to date, I read that day's extract: Leviticus 14 and 15...

It included such topical classics as Leviticus 14.38, in which a priest puts a house in quarantine for seven days. Then there was Leviticus 15.11: if you're touched by that fella who's not rinsed his hands, put a wash on and take a bath.

Thankfully I'm not just a comedian (comedy's much-needed, but tricky sometimes, especially now all my gigs have moved online). Doing Radio 2's Pause For Thought used to be my top-up job – now it's my main income. Writing a 'thought' recently themed on angels, I heard that the angelic greeting, 'Do not be afraid' is the Bible's most common instruction. Apparently, it features 365 times, one for every day of the year.

There may be a time for Levitical instruction: those hand-washing and quarantine tips are having their moment. But there's a daily need to hear God's main message, so crucial that angels utter it as often as we say, 'Hello': Don't be afraid. We need to hear it, tell it and live it daily.



A prayer for others

Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are empty;
for all who feel alone and unloved;
for those whose lives lack, or have recently lost, purpose.

We pray for those whose lives are filled with anger and bitterness;
for those who cannot let go of the past,
and so have little present or future hope in their lives.

We pray for those whose lives are filled with anguish and pain;
for those who suffer in the current crisis;
for those who are afraid to go to work because of the risks;
for those who cannot see a way forward.

We pray for those who live on the edge;
for those who watch others enjoy life but are unable to join in;
for those who lack faith; and for those whom others ignore.

Loving God, in a world that needs a message of life and hope,
may your abundant life fill our world, our church and ourselves,
in the name of Jesus .

Amen

A personal prayer

Thank you for abundant life; thank you for your
generous love.
Help me to love generously that others may also
experience the abundance of your love.

Amen