



WEEKLY WELCOME – 'AT HOME'

24<sup>th</sup> May 2020

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Verse of the Week

*You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world.  
A town built on a hill cannot be hidden... let your light shine before others,  
that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:13-18*

### **Just a Thought ... Exercising Faith**

In mid-April when the Government extended the lockdown by a further 3 weeks, they reinforced the message to 'Stay at home to save as many lives as possible.' Prime Minister, Boris Johnson added "It's important for me to level with you – we know things will get worse before they get better. But we are making the right preparations, and the more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal.'

The words 'things will get worse before they get better' stayed in my mind. When problems, strife and fears arise we all long for that 'better time and outcome.'

We would all prefer instant solutions, less time of struggling and more stability than the unknown.

At present, life doesn't just have jagged edges, but in some aspects, has no edges to it at all. However, our faith in God enables us to trust Him in the dark and unknown. As RT Kendall writes in his book *More of God*, "God wants us to serve Him without getting all our questions answered."

In addition to daily physical exercise which we are all encouraged to take, as disciples of Jesus, this is a season to ensure we keep spiritually healthy and 'keep exercising our faith.' In the things we don't understand and when we cannot see the way forward, we start to experience what Paul the apostle meant when he said "*We live by faith, not by sight.*" (2 Cor 5:7)

Many years ago (as I waited for the Dartmouth ferry) I watched a man cross the river on his sail-board. He may have been saving on ferry fares – but as he landed safely on the other side, it made me think of faith, because he was wearing his everyday clothes. He was confident in himself that he would cross the water without falling off his board, and get to his destination – dry! And he did!

The bible defines faith as: "... being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)

The object of biblical faith is a complete trust in God and His Son Jesus Christ and an unwavering confidence in His Word.

Billy Graham said, "Faith isn't pretending our problems don't exist, nor is it simply blind optimism. Faith points us beyond our problems to the hope we have in Christ." Walking by faith means we will not get discouraged when we face disruption, distress or disappointment – because our trust is in God for strength and the solution - and not in ourselves.

Faith is also a key to pleasing God as we trust in His love, salvation, forgiveness, provision and goodness. The writer to Hebrews said, "... without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him ..." (Hebrews 11:6)

The Bible is packed with promises from God – which He is watching over to perform in the lives of those who will take Him at His word and act on what He says. In God's greater plan and purpose for our lives – the best is always yet to come, but we must always remember that 'any waiting time' is never wasted. These are the times when we grow in faith, endurance, perseverance and godliness.

Jim Collins

## **Interview with Dan Orton**

We all know Maria, but we don't know Dan Orton as well. It was my privilege to interview Dan this week for our service this Sunday and ask him about his work. For those of you who are unable to access the services online here is a summary of the interview.

Dan is a Tutor and Teacher at South Devon College. Among other things his work includes helping those with learning difficulties and, specifically, a group with mental health issues. His task includes enabling these people to find a stepping stone into education or enabling them to gain basic skills for life and work. During this period of lockdown, his work has

been done online working with a computer programme that enables him to communicate with the students and others. This programme enables him to set work and see how the students are getting on. His major role has been keeping in contact with the most vulnerable of these students.

There are particular challenges that Dan faces during this period. Motivating students and addressing a lack of confidence is difficult in normal times and is particularly difficult now. Students who rely on other support services have found these have been reduced which has been a problem. Gathering students together for team building or other life building skills is not happening and that is being missed.

Dan asks us to pray that we as Christians might take a lead in creating a better world after lockdown. He asks that we pray for his students with the challenges they face. He would like us to pray, too, for wisdom as to how education can come out of the lockdown period safely.

### **Notes from Geoff's talk:**

Reading: Matthew 5:13-18, 1 Peter 2:9-11

We all look forward to the end of lockdown. The ability to meet family and friends, to go out to a café and to get some sort of normality back into our lives. While there have been negatives in this time it has also been a time to reflect.

I have listened to and been part of a number of conversations at this time that have caused me to think. Prayers have been prayed that people will find Christ in these circumstances. Others have asked whether Christ is going to return and maybe this might cause people to think. There has been encouragement to pray for revival. However, all of these seem to have the focus on what God might do 'out there' in the world. My question is to ask what God might want to be saying to Christians. When this is all over what kind of people will we be?

The readings today challenge us to be salt and light. Salt gives flavour and acts as a preservative. Light gives direction. We are here for the good of the world.

The reading from 1 Peter tells us that we are God's people to tell of the good things that God has done but also to live such good lives that, while we might be seen as odd, people cannot help but praise God.

I have been studying the letters to the seven churches in Revelation recently. The context of these was real or impending persecution. These early Christians were a minority. They did not worship the idols, believing in one God. They were called atheists. They also refused to worship the emperor as a god. This cut them off from the community and much of its life. The temptation was to compromise. Even though they were under these pressures the church continued to grow.

We live in similar days. We, too, are a minority. In a world where God is seen as an irrelevance and there are all kinds of other things calling for our 'worship' the temptation is to compromise our faith.

It is my conviction that God will work through the church to bring people to faith, but only when the church is committed to him. We can pray as much as we like for people to turn to Christ and for revival to come, but we need to understand that nothing will happen unless we place ourselves at the centre of that prayer.

People will not see Christ if they do not see Christ in us. There are far too many horror stories of people being turned off faith because of the behaviour of Christians.

Revival has always begun in the church with the renewal of the people of God. It comes when we admit our total need of God and seek a sovereign move of his Spirit among us.

When this is all over what kind of people will we be?

Let's seek renewal that we might be salt and light, people who declare God's goodness in our words and actions and praying that God will revive us by his Spirit.

## **Building Update**

Some of you will have noticed that there has recently been some scaffolding in place by the old choir loft. This has been put there for two purposes. One, to clean off the weeds that were growing on that roof and in the gutters, but also to enable us to put some 'anti-seagull' spikes on the two flat ledges adjacent to that dormer window. This should stop the seagulls nesting there, reduce the amount of guano deposited, and hence the 'soil' for the vegetation to grow on. We have managed to stop 4 to 5 pairs of seagulls nesting at that end of the church. This will have the added benefit of curtailing the seagull attacks on our gardeners and other people walking past that area. They seemed particularly keen on injuring people with bald heads, as ex-pastor Geoff will attest to!

Every Blessing

Keep Safe

Edwin

**I have taken on the task of collating the Weekly Welcome – At Home whilst it is needed. If you do have any news or words of encouragement do email me at [geoff.andrews61@gmail.com](mailto:geoff.andrews61@gmail.com) or telephone and leave a message on 01803 854718. Space is limited but I will try to incorporate these. Geoff**