

Easter 2020

In these extraordinary times it seems strange to say Happy Easter but remembering quite what Easter is all about, the risen Christ defeating once and for all eternal death, then we can say with it some conviction and authority. So, a very happy Easter to you all.

I have been thinking about all this social distancing that we are continually reminded to adhere to and I'm not sure that I like it very much although I can obviously see how important it is to our survival. Looking to the scriptures for solace we can see that Jesus was into touching people in a big way. Remember the account of the woman who was bleeding and reached out to Christ in amongst a big crowd? She had the conviction and strength of faith to know that if she could just touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. Jesus, on the other hand had the sensitivity and compassion, open to all who believe and beyond, to feel his healing power leave his presence and go into that woman. The woman, touching any Jew, let alone Jesus Christ was on dodgy ground because she was bleeding and thus unclean according to Jewish law and one might expect anyone else, other than Jesus, to embark on a savage verbal attack followed by a thorough cleansing of themselves. What would be your reaction if this Easter someone broke the social distancing role and clasped you because they felt so estranged from human contact, they felt so lonely and sad? Yes it could be risky but sometimes you have to do what you have to do. People need healing.

Which brings me onto some other actions of Jesus. The blind man was given the gift of his sight after Jesus spat in the sand and then applied the mixture to his eyes. In fact, most of his healing involved touch. Touching another human being, especially in the form of giving comfort, is an act of God's love for mankind, or personkind if that is a word nowadays. But touching wasn't a mandatory part of Jesus' healing. And of course and there is the passage in both Matthew and Luke about Jesus bringing back from the dead the Centurion's daughter remotely:

'When (Jesus) was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.'

Three things of note here – the Centurion thinks that he is not worthy of any help from Jesus because he's not Jewish and even worse, he's a part of the occupying forces. Secondly although he most likely isn't a big follower of Christ at that point, he has enough faith through what he has heard spoken of him that he is convinced that if Jesus decides to help him then it will happen. Thirdly, he believes that Jesus doesn't even have to turn up to heal the girl, he just needs to say the word.

So, on this Easter morning, a morning when we rejoice in the risen Christ amid all of this tragedy that we find our world in, we can be sure that we followers of Christ can still reach out to him and we will be healed, and we can tell the non-followers of Christ that they can be healed as well – they just have to have a bit of faith. In the meantime, we should be praying for the unbelievers on their behalf.

I look forward very much to better times when Anne and I can once again hug our daughters and grandchild and anyone else that needs it but in the meantime, I sincerely wish you all a very happy Easter.

Amen