



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 5: Sunday 3rd May 2020

Dear Friends,

In her recent televised address to the nation, Her Majesty the Queen concluded her message of hope with the words, "We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again".

That final phrase echoes, of course, the wartime song, "We'll meet again" which was sung so powerfully by Dame Vera Lynn, but it also echoes an image that we find in Jeremiah chapter 33.

In my letter in last week's edition of 'The Anchor', I made reference to Jeremiah chapter 29 and to God's promise of 'a future and a hope'. Just a few chapters on we find that hope described in more detail in Chapter 33 v 10-11 in words which speak vividly of our current situation.

'This is what the Lord says:... "Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord, saying,

'Give thanks to the Lord Almighty, for the Lord is good; his love endures for ever.'

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before," says the Lord.

Those words were written many centuries ago, and yet, they could be a description of the world in which we live today. The streets are deserted, weddings have been postponed and we are not able to physically 'bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord'. In these days, God invites us to encourage each other with the words "We will meet again"

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake



Worship Reflection

Introduction

'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10 v 14-15)

Hymn

From the breaking of the dawn,
to the setting of the sun,
I will stand on every promise of
your word.

Words of power, strong to save,
that will never pass away;
I will stand on every promise of your word.
For your covenant is sure,
and on this I am secure:
I can stand on every promise of your word.
(StF 156)



Prayer

Living God, remind us today of your greatness and power, your will and purpose, and your grace and mercy, and may that knowledge shape who we are, what we think and all we do, today and always.
Amen.

Bible Reading

'Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger's voice.' Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore, Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

(John 10 v 1-10)

Reflection

Each of the Gospel writers has his own intended audience and his own individual style. John's Gospel is particularly written for those who enjoy the philosophical thought patterns of the day. John's style can be described as more like a spiral than a straight line as John reflects from different angles on various images and insights.

In this passage John records Jesus saying, "I am the gate for the sheep" while in the verses that follow (v 11-17) John will move on to focus on Jesus' statement "I am the Good Shepherd". Both of these images have much to teach us. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads the flock – but he is also the 'gate'. This image reminds us of how the shepherd would lie down across the entrance of the three-sided sheep pen to keep the sheep safe – even at the cost of his own life.

As we reflect on these two images, we are invited to praise Jesus who, as the gate, protects us from danger and who, as the Good Shepherd, leads us forwards.

Prayers of Intercession

In the power of the resurrection we offer our prayers to God. We pray for:

- Our government as difficult decisions are made about the future of the lockdown
- All those who continue to put themselves 'in harm's way' for the sake of others.
- All who are bereaved and who are not able to meet with others in their time of loss.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn

The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine for ever.



And so, through all the length of days,
Thy goodness faileth never
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within thy house for ever.
(StF 479)

Final Prayer

Let your outstretched arm, O Lord, be our defence;
your mercy and loving kindness in Jesus Christ, our salvation;
and the grace of your life-giving Spirit, our strength;
now and for ever. Amen.

Images of Spring



Thank you again for your 'Images of Spring'. Here are two contributions which missed last week's deadline. Thank you to Melanie and to Joy (C) from North Camp.



The Methodist Church and Cliff College are currently working on 'The Story

Project' This project aims to encourage people to 'tell their story' and in this way to share with others what it means for them to be a follower of Jesus.

Over the next few weeks (as space permits) I would like to adapt this idea and to include in 'The Anchor' some of your stories about what being a Christian means to you. This will help us to get to know each other a little better, and it will hopefully help us to encourage each other in these days of separation.

I therefore invite you to select a Bible verse, or part of a hymn or worship song, or perhaps a prayer that you have read or written and then write about what that verse or hymn or prayer means to you – perhaps by describing a particular event or time in your life which relates to the verse, hymn or prayer that you have chosen.

I plan to share a number of these 'mini-testimony' stories over the weeks ahead. The maximum word count will be 250 words, and this should include the verse or hymn or prayer that you are speaking about.

To give everyone some 'thinking time' I've asked my wife Joy to contribute to next week's edition – but any mini-testimony stories for future issues will be welcome for future editions. I look forward to hearing from you.