



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 16: Sunday 19th July 2020

Dear Friends,



The small village of Eyam is located in the beautiful countryside of the Derbyshire Peak District. The area is a popular tourist destination but, in

the current context of the coronavirus pandemic, there is a particular interest in Eyam and its history.

Eyam, which is often described as 'The Plague Village', was one of the few places outside London to be infected with the Great Plague in 1665. One theory is that the disease came from London, arriving in a consignment of cloth for the local tailor. If the cloth was damp, and the tailor hung it in front of a fire to dry, the plague-carrying fleas would have become active.

As the disease took hold, and under the direction of the local vicar, William Mompesson, the villagers agreed to cut themselves off from the outside world so that the plague would not spread beyond the village.

The villagers isolated themselves for total of 14 months. They managed to prevent the spread of the disease but, during those months, around 260 out of the original population of 800 had died.



It is a powerful story of Christian self-sacrifice and I wanted to tell you the story for two reasons.

The first reason is that we have a personal link with the village because our son Steve, his wife Rachel and their two children live in the village. They are all involved in the life of the Parish Church where Rachel is the Youth Worker.

The second reason is that this Sunday's edition of BBC Songs of Praise will focus on Eyam and its example of self-sacrifice at the time of the plague. Rachel and our younger grandson were included

in the filming of the programme. They may or may not be seen in the final broadcast version of the programme, but I'm sure that the story of Eyam will be told in an interesting and inspiring way and that the programme will be well worth watching.

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake

Worship Reflection

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God. (Psalm 147 v 1)

Hymn (StF 103)

God is Love: let heaven adore him; God is Love: let earth rejoice; let creation sing before him, and exalt him with one voice.

He who laid the earth's foundation, he who spread the heavens above, he who breathes through all creation, he is Love, eternal Love.

Prayer

Gracious God, you bless us beyond our imagining, love us beyond our dreaming, forgive us beyond our deserving, and use us beyond our hoping. To you be praise and thanksgiving, honour and adoration, now and always. Amen

Bible Reading (Genesis 28 v 10-17)

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

Reflection

The Old Testament reading for this Sunday describes the dream in which Jacob, sleeping with only a stone for a pillow, has a dream in which he sees what has become known as 'Jacob's Ladder' connecting earth and heaven. In that dream, God makes a number of promises to Jacob, not least the promise that God will not leave Jacob, whatever the future holds.



When he wakes up Jacob describes that place as 'the house of God' and the 'gate of heaven'.

In more recent times, church buildings have often been referred to as the 'house of God'. It's a phrase that describes the fact that those who have gathered have often felt connected to God as they have met in that building for worship.

However, the account of Jacob's dream reminds us that wherever we are – even sleeping under the stars with a stone for a pillow – we can draw close to God. Jesus came and lived among us so that we might know 'God with us' wherever we are and whatever situation we find ourselves in – not just in a church building. This truth is particularly important for us to remember in these continuing 'lockdown days'.

For the followers of Jesus, 'the house of God' and 'the gate of heaven' are, by the power of the Holy Spirit, only a prayer away.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray especially this week for -

- Our county's leaders as they seek to balance the needs of people's health with the needs of the economy.
- Those within our churches as they prepare the detailed risk assessments required to open up our buildings.

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

Hymn (StF 470)

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way, sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided: Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Final Prayer May the grace of God uphold us, may the peace of God surround us, may the love of God flow from us and may the strength of God protect us. Amen.

The Methodist Church is encouraging us all to 'tell our stories'.

This week's contribution is from Joy Chapman from North Camp.



"Have mercy Lord, Forgive us Lord. Restore us Lord. Revive your Church again. Let justice flow, like rivers, and righteousness like a never failing stream"

With only a few years to go before reaching my 'century', I've seen a lot of water flowing under the bridge I'm standing on right now. I lived for over 80 years as a white person in Africa. I realise now, looking back, how privileged were those first few decades. I married in 1944, my husband worked in the steel works. We had six children, they all had a good education and got good jobs and life was good.

Then followed a time of great change as the country became independent, bringing to an end the time of white supremacy. Our grandchildren were brought up with no sense of racial discrimination and, realising past injustices, our lives were changing too.

Sadly my husband died in 2001 and in 2009 I moved to England where three of my children live.

I have 15 grandchildren. Three of the 12 who are married are in 'mixed race' marriages and this has brought a good variety into our family. I feel truly blessed for my family which now includes 20 wonderful great grandchildren.

I know now that God is good. He loves everyone, irrespective of their race or the colour of their skin. We all need to love and respect one another as God's loved and loving children.

The worship song quoted above is one which I heard recently and which seems applicable in these times.



Bible Reading: © Biblica 2011. Prayers: Methodist Prayer Handbook © TMCP 2019. Some prayers taken from "2000 prayers for public worship" by Nick Fawcett. CCLI No 000295.