WORSHIP WEEK 5 – 4 MAY 2020

Strange days indeed! Our world has changed beyond recognition, and continues to change daily. In these times it is really important for us to develop our relationship with God, and to bring into our prayers those in particular need.

Most of us are social distancing or self-isolating, but let’s remember those who are still at work in the thick of things. At Bents Green we are blessed by many NHS staff – Ben and Rachel, Chris, Debs, Hazel, Julie, Pete and Amy, Shungu, Steph’s daughter Leah, Margaret and John’s daughter Helen, and Fran’s daughter Katherine. Let’s pray that these key workers and their families may be protected from ill health, and able to do their jobs on the front line. Let’s remember too the teachers among us, who may be working from home providing lessons on-line, or in school caring for the children of key workers, and becoming key workers themselves – Alison, Charlotte, Helen, Simon Collis and Simon Hall. And there are others, busy keeping the industry and commerce on which we depend functioning. Clap for them all on Thursday nights, and hold them before God in prayer as never before. (Please let me know if there are others I have missed.)

And let us continue to find ways to support those who have to step back from the world at this time. This is my own situation, and I call to mind one sentence from the Covenant Service which has really resonated with me this year. In that service we commit ourselves to God ‘when there is work for me and when there is none’. An older version puts it better – ‘let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you’. We like to be busy and feel we are doing things that are valuable, but it must take a special kind of grace to rest with God when there is so much that needs doing, but for whatever reason we are unable to do it.

The apostle Paul kept up a frenetic pace, travelling, preaching and teaching, planting churches and moving on at a great rate. But he then had a lengthy period of being laid aside. Acts 24:27 says that he had two years in custody under Governor Felix. Then he had a long and difficult journey, including shipwreck, and two years under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30). This must have been so hard for such a dynamic missionary. All the while he was anxious about the churches he had planted. He wanted to revisit them, and go to more people who had never heard the gospel.

So he wrote letters. In these he set out the gospel, and provided a library of Christian teaching which have blessed countless millions over 2000 years. His laid-aside years bore far more fruit than his years of busy-ness.

Most of us now face a lengthy period of being laid aside. We won’t be able to do many of the things we want to do, and know need doing. But God can give us the grace to find new ways to grow in faith and fellowship, that could be more rich and fruitful than any of our busy days.

*Produced by John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*