

## Thoughts for Sunday 10.5.20 by Revd Janet Faul

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

Acts 7.55-end

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

John 14.1-14

Don't let your hearts be troubled.....that's quite a difficult instruction to follow in today's crisis. We are all wondering what lockdown news we will hear this evening from the government, we're wondering what that will mean for tomorrow, we troubled for what that will mean about next week, troubled about next month, even next year..... We just don't know about the future and that is difficult.

However, our readings encourage us to look beyond, to look beyond our present restrictions and sacrifices to a future home and realm that is secure, that ISN'T ON lockdown, to look beyond our universe...to heaven's threshold, where, at the time that God decrees, the doors of heaven will open for us, and we will be welcomed to the home Jesus has prepared for us. Stephen as he approached his death saw the glory of God and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Looking beyond enabled Stephen and the disciples to not be troubled.

How would we fare I wonder?

This weekend I've thought much about how I would fare if I had been alive during the years of the second world war or even of the first world war....today being the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Could I have looked beyond to a better time to keep my hopes up...could I have been assured that fighting the enemy or risking my life in a primitive hospital would make enough difference? Thankfully, our forces and the example and work of Florence Nightingale did make a difference, a huge difference for us who have followed on. They could see the day dawning when the lights would be turned back on and for that many gave their lives.

Everytime we conquer an enemy, whether a virus or an army, light overcomes darkness

We too must look beyond this day, this crisis, not to hide away but to know that the future is worth fighting for....every life is precious to God and we must make our day to day sacrifices to protect others. We must keep the rainbow symbol in our souls...trusting as Noah did that God will not forsake us... little by little God's kingdom draws nearer. On the TV we see the statistics of daily cases and sadly daily deaths, it's been described as a bumpy ride. We are in a dip presently financially, health wise, mentally, but as Christians we must believe God is taking us on an upward curve.....we are nearer to the coming reign of God's kingdom than we were yesterday....each day we live out our purpose as apportioned to us and we work along with others, serving our neighbours and communities, for that new day dawning when the earth will be transformed into all the glory of heaven. No more fighting, not more persecution, not more sickness or despair.

One day we will not be straining to see into the future like we are now, for we will gaze into the fully glory of heaven.

God made us to see...let's have the sight of those we honour today who have gone before us to see that all that God has made is good and worth every sacrifice. And let us with the Holy Spirits help see beyond, to see beyond our present darkness as we look to serve our neighbours and community to bring God's kingdom closer, day by day. Amen