

Dear friends

And you thought that not being able to meet in person meant that you would be spared a sermon from me!

I have been able to “speak” with several of you over the last two weeks by phone, by email, by Zoom, by YouTube chat, from the end of your garden path and I have been struck by how much we miss meeting each other. I have also been reminded how I felt after 9-11: confused, scared and not at all sure what to make of events or what to say to others.

I may have shared before that I was planned to take a service at Minster the Sunday after 9-11, unusually for me when I was in full time work I had my service fully planned, the sermon written and everything by the previous Monday. By Tuesday afternoon it was obvious that nobody would hear that particular sermon and I needed to prepare a whole new service. At the time there were some children coming to Minster services including the Graff girls, aged about 6 and 8 at the time. I knew I had to speak honestly to the congregation, but I didn’t want to worry or scare the children. So, I phoned Tony (we weren’t using mobile phones or social media then!) and asked his advice. Amongst other wise words he reminded me of the words from John chapter 1, verse 6. **The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot defeat it.** These words seemed important to me then and they feel important today.

Other words which always come to my mind at times of doubt or darkness are from the hymn (Singing The Faith 350) “I cannot tell” with its repeated **“but this I know”** and I do know that God is love, that God loves me and God loves you.

In words from Stephen R Donaldson’s “Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever” series. **There is also love in the world.**

Friends I have nothing original to share with you; but I do know that I miss seeing you all and I do know that God is my loving father. In words familiar to Newington folk **“God’s blessing surrounds us each day.”**

I have also been struck over the last few days at how unimportant things are that seemed so important just a month ago. Buying my preferred brand of anything, what version of the Bible to use, what kind of hymns are “best”, who to welcome into church, differences of political and theological opinion. When

I have “met” with anybody recently I am just grateful that they are part of God’s family too and that I can share with them. Differences of opinion and petty disagreements just don’t matter a jot. (I must try to remember that when we are back to “normal”!)

There is a radio programme called “Clare’s Ramblings” and I feel that these really have been Martin’s ramblings, I am very glad that the structure and content are not being assessed. (Please don’t feel the need to prove me wrong and assess them for me!)

Keep it simple.

God is our loving Father. He has always been our loving Father and he loves us still.

After Good Friday comes Easter Sunday.

So it always has, and so it will again. The wait may be long and dark, longer and darker than we can know or anticipate but “a change is gonna come”.

The light **will** shine through the darkness.

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

Stay safe

Martin

