

Anxiety - a Lent Perspective .

A message on a coffee mug: "STRESS ... is the result of people assuming that they are in control of things." !

A message underlined by the first words of John 15: "You believe in God; believe also in me."

In this chapter of John, together with the next three chapters, Jesus is preparing his disciples (which may include you and me!) for his approaching death and resurrection. They have just about grasped that he is the Messiah, the One who is to come, when he talks of suffering and death. Peter's reaction (Mark8:32) perhaps speaks for all of them. His death is unthinkable. Again and again we hear Jesus saying, "Peace be with you!" here, it is, "Peace I give you. My peace I leave with you; **Not as the world gives**, but a deep assurance that whatever comes to us, 'all shall be well.'"

At the beginning of the first lockdown, I found myself needing to pray daily, for the grace of Trust. I still do. It means commitment to Him, and allowing Him to be in control.

What, for you, has been the hardest thing about Lockdown, about this whole Covid crisis? I feel that I have got a nerve, trying to write about it, as I am one of the lucky ones. I have not lost a job, or an income, or people close to me. Yes of course I have missed social contact, especially with my family, and other things have been trying, but 'trying' is hardly life threatening, and many families are experiencing real hardship. What can this message of Peace. Freedom from anxiety, mean to them?

I ask again: what, for you has been the hardest thing about this whole crisis, and as a Christian, does John 14 help?

How about verse 4, "You know the way to the place I am going." Do we? And verse 18, "I will not leave you orphaned. I will come to you. Because I live, you will live also?"

Peace, not as the world gives; not just a cessation of hostilities. His peace is not freedom from suffering; far from it. He shows us, and promises us a way through, it only works as we face up to His cross, and look at him there, and discover that that really can change us.

I am reminded of another time of national darkness. In 1941 King George VI spoke to the nation. He quoted, 'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light, that I may walk safely into the unknown' and he said to me, "Put your hand into the hand of God, and that shall be for you better than a light, and safer than a known way".

All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.
(Julian of Norwich)

Gemma Morgan