



### Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020 – Easter 6 – Thoughts for Pilgrims

Readings – Acts 17:22-31, Psalm 66:7-18, 1 Peter 3:13-22, John 14:15-22

“I will not leave you alone” “ I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper to be with you for ever – the Spirit of Truth” “I will love those who love me and will show myself to them”

*The five day walk which Annie and I did last year from Sarria to Santiago in the company of a group of family was our introduction to the Camino. We walked sometimes as a group, sometimes alone, sometimes briefly with other people we met on the way. For me, it was not so much the destination of Santiago that stood out, but the time on the walk to enjoy the beauty of creation around us in the green woods and valleys of Galicia, the time to reflect peacefully without the pressures of life at home and work. So, for me, it was like a retreat and I found myself often remembering other retreats and quiet day experiences when, alongside the times of worship and prayer, I have taken a walk around – in the grounds of the Taize community, around the Isle of Iona, in the country near St Beuno’s in North Wales, or in the grounds of the Bield retreat centre in Perthshire where we live in retirement. Of course we cannot always get away from daily routines, which is what makes it so special when we can, but also why it is helpful to build times of quiet and prayer into what we do on a daily basis. Sunday worship, and scripture at home, give us material for reflection and inform our prayers.*

So, if you have already read today’s bible passages, **before you read further pause and think** what verses or details stand out for you and why. If you’ve not read them yet, maybe pause and read them now then do the same.

But here are my thoughts in response to these readings –

from **Acts** we have Paul in the Areopagus telling his Greek audience that the unknown God they have worshipped is perhaps the very God whom Paul has discovered in Christ and is now preaching. Is it not the case that even the most unreligious person has some feeling of searching for meaning, some ideal that they cannot express or name? So if, like Paul, we are called to make ourselves “all things to all men” in order to bring others to faith we need to think how to tap in to the ways of thinking that are our neighbour’s in order to make our faith make sense to those unfamiliar with our faith patterns of thought and belief.

Then the **Psalm** – the verse which stands out for me is verse 10 “God, you have tested us, you have purified us like silver”. Are we not going through a time of testing at the moment with the lock down, or “confinement” as it is called in some languages? Missing the regular contact with family and friends, anxious about infection, trying or struggling to find alternative ways of relating to our loved ones, of worshipping at home and remaining in fellowship with our churches? Already many are pointing out that some changes seem to be for the better –

*the reduction in pollution, the working out of what is really important in life, the hope that this time of testing may bring at least some lasting benefits to our wayward race.*

***Peter** affirms for us the Easter message of Jesus' resurrection, Christ's power and authority, His victory over sin and death, and stresses the imperative for the believer to bear witness - "Always be prepared to give and answer to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope you have" – and reminds us to do so gently and respectfully. For harshly judgemental or tactless remarks can only hurt or deter the other person from looking further.*

*And lastly the **Gospel**, words of Jesus Himself in John, promising the Holy Spirit, the "other counsellor", promising the disciples and us that we shall never be left alone "as orphans" for He will be with us always ("always to the end of the age" as He says in Matthew 28), and reminding the disciples and us that love is to be mutual, He will love those who love Him, and that we show our love by obeying His commands, or, as He says to Peter in chapter 21, by tending, feeding, His flock which is our neighbours, those around us. The lock down has inspired many amazing acts of generosity from such a wide spectrum of people in the community. In the midst of this testing time we have much to be grateful for.*

So, in our prayers, let us first of all give thanks, thanks to God for all He has done for us in Christ, and thanks for those around us who have helped and supported those in need, for those working in the health service and caring professions, for those who are near and dear to us and all they share with us. Let us pray for strength and guidance for those in government and authority, even now planning for emergence from the lock down and for economic recovery, but hopefully also seeing how we can learn lessons for a better preserving of the environment, God's creation, and for better relations between the people's of the world. Let us pray for those who are sick or suffering, grieving, lonely, depressed and anxious. Think of the Taize chorus "*In our darkness there is no darkness with you, O Lord, the deepest night is clear as the day*". And, as we look forward to the Ascension, think of those uplifting hymns – "*Hail the day that sees him rise*", "*Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne*", "*All hail the power of Jesus' name*". And remembering that this coming week is also Rogationtide, let us pray for those who work on the Land and in Industry –

"Dear God, you crown the Year with your goodness, and give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, so that none may hunger, none may thirst, and all may cherish the gifts of your creation, through Christ our Lord...AMEN"

God bless you on your journeys and explorings

Revd William Hogg

