

**Wednesday 20th May 2020**

*“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”*

Dear Friends

What a great story! Anyone who has mislaid car keys or a bank card or even something very ordinary like a shopping list can relate to the anxiety and frustration of the woman in Jesus’ parable. I once lost an entire set of church keys…but that story is best saved for another time.

This pandemic is encouraging many of us to think afresh about our possessions and what we are attached to – and what we’re not. Perhaps you’ve taken the opportunity of being locked down to sort out a few dusty corners that have been cluttered by the busyness of normally full lives. The vicarage garage is certainly tidier than ever.

One gift of COVID-19 is the opportunity to clean out – and as we sort, discard, recycle, renew, we can discover in the process that something positive internally is happening as well. For there is a spiritual side to having a good clear out as we put behind us times in our lives from which we need to move on, or discover we can transform a part of our own story by giving treasured belongings a new lease of life.

I wonder if the woman in the story kept a tidier home following the loss of her coin…

Loss, of course, is one big theme of this pandemic. At its worst, many have suffered the loss of loved ones and then suffered the loss of being able to grieve in the company of family and friends in the way they would wish. Tens of thousands, possibly more, have lost their jobs through redundancy – an experience I went through in the early 1990s, and the recovery was at times slow and painful. Millions of course, all of us in one way or another, have lost income as the markets have crashed and the economy come to a virtual standstill.

All of this experience of loss comes at a price that will be paid by our society and communities for many years and probably multiple generations to come.

The Christian faith has so much to say in response to all of this – from the special uniqueness of each individual, cradled, loved and made in God’s image; all the way through to our theologies of creation that emphasise the interdependence of the whole of the created order; that the whole world – not just humanity - is in this together.

And running through all of this is our central belief in hope. One of my favourite Psalms is this one – 126:

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,

 we were like those who dreamed.

Our mouths were filled with laughter,

 our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,

 “The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us,

 and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, Lord,

 like streams in the Negev.

Those who sow with tears

 will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping,

 carrying seed to sow,

will return with songs of joy,

 carrying sheaves with them.

Having a good clear out is a great sign of hope – hope for yourself, for your mental health, for your belief in a purposeful future for you, your family and friends.

And please don’t worry when you weep – joy is coming.

This comes with my continuing love and prayers,

David Ford, Rector

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