

29th March 2020

Hi Everyone,

How are you doing? How are you finding [self-isolation and social distancing](#)? It certainly re-defines the way we live our lives from day to day, separating us from the people that are normally part of our everyday lives: relatives, friends, neighbours, school mates, church friends and so on.

If you are like me you have had to learn a different routine, either in near total isolation if you live on your own, or in very close proximity with immediate family for example, which can bring its own challenges. I keep thinking of Jesus and his self-imposed self-isolation for 40 days in the wilderness. He used this time to prepare himself for his ministry amongst the people, knowing that from that point forward he would have little time to himself. He used the time to focus on his relationship with God knowing that this would stand him in good stead when times get difficult.

It's funny how some things that are forced on us can be turned into a positive. I've learnt how to use video conferencing to keep in touch with my work friends and colleagues and we 'meet' online every day at 2.00pm. I'm not normally at home during the day and I scarcely know any of my neighbours. Now I look forward to chatting to them across the garden fence. The guys I play football with on a Wednesday have set up a WhatsApp group to share funny experiences and make fun of each other. People have rung me up more regularly than before and another person even offered to do my shopping. So, although I am self-isolated, in a funny sort of way I feel more connected than usual.

Just before I started writing this reflection, I was aware of a strange noise outside in the street. I opened the window to loud clapping and whooping. I suddenly remembered it was 8.00pm when we were being encouraged [to clap in support of and gratitude for health workers](#), so I joined in. It was quite emotional because, in all the years I have lived in this street, I've never felt as connected to all my neighbours as I did at that moment.

This week's bible reading is again from [John's Gospel, Chapter 11, verses 1-45](#). It is another healing incident from Jesus' ministry, but very different from the one we read about last week. This is about the death of Lazarus and how Jesus raised him back to life. Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, were very close friends of Jesus and, unlike any of the other miracles he performed, there is a real sense of personal grief and tragedy involved here.

Every evening we are bombarded with the statistics of the number of people in different parts of the world who have died from Covid19. The statistics do not tell the story of individual loss and bereavement. Behind every death is a loved one lost. The emotions of Mary and Martha, and Jesus himself, help us to appreciate more what people who have lost loved ones are going through. We look for answers as to why this has happened and where God is in all of it, and cling onto the words of Jesus in verse 25 of our reading: 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will never die'.

Rodney