

Christ the King

22nd November 2020

Jupiter the largest planet in our solar system, has a large red spot which is a storm that has been raging for over 300 years. As we draw towards the end of 2020 its fair to say we have witnessed the raging of storms over the last year.

Covid 19 has wreaked havoc bringing untold loss and trauma, lives have been lost, families left in isolation to grieve alone, jobs have been lost and it feels like we are disorientated and lost in a foreign land. We don't know where we are and the immediate future is uncertain and we aren't sure where we are going.

Everyone has an opinion on how to manage this time, for me, I found the words of John O' Donohue, the Irish poet very powerful. One of his poems reads:

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.

I have found myself lying close to the wall waiting for the storm to pass, sheltering in a safe haven. Sailors know this, during a storm they make for a safe harbour, they only ride the storm out if there is no landfall to make. Right now I believe the church and society should lie low to the wall and bring as many as we can safely through this period. When the storm passes then we re-assess where we are and build and re-build once more. Many disagree with me on this point and they can make their choices accordingly. For me now is the time to wait, to shelter through the storm of night and have faith and patience that this too shall pass.

Even now hope verges on the horizon like just as the night gives way to the light of the eastern sky at dawn. The new year promises to bring a number of highly effective vaccines and testament to the ingenuity of the human race. I found it humbling that the husband and wife team that developed one of the vaccines were refugees from Turkey.

As we look to the future with hope, what do we do now as we endure a winter with this dreaded virus? For me I will wait, I will wait and remember. I will wait for the storm to pass, I will wait upon the grace and providence of God.

This time of year is naturally a time for remembrance. We remember and give thanks for the goodness of God in creation at Harvest, We pause to remember the lives of all those who go before across the narrow stream of death into God's eternal rest and care and we look forward to a time when the Church below and above is re-united in the glorious splendour of the Kingdom of God here we are heirs together with Christ. We remember the lives of those given striving to build a future of peace and prosperity and we arrive today where we remember all the promises of God, that Jesus the Messiah will return in glory and splendour and his Kingdom will restore all things, pain and tears will be washed away and that Kingdom will stand for all time.

Our Gospel reading speaks of this return of Christ, Matthew speaks in a tone which leaves no doubt, this will come to pass, it is going to happen. At this time there will be a distinction made between those who remained generous to those in need and those who didn't.

As we lie sheltered against the wall, hidden from the stormy winds that blow, let us dare to dream, to imagine a better world, a better church where the love and grace of God flows into this world and out of our churches to those in need around us.

The storm will pass, warm skies will return and will be together again. In many ways much will have changed and will need to build and re-build our churches and ministries and mission to the world. What has never changed is the Gospel of Christ and its message of love and compassion, hope and redemption offered to all, a hope that all are called to be heirs in the Kingdom together.

For now, shelter and take cover, dream of a better future and a better church for a better world. Ask God to show your part in that place and be ready to add your voice and your life in service of the Kingdom a new. Amen.