

Easter Vigil 2020

New Life. New Beginnings.

Liberation, Redemption, Salvation

Tonight, we listen and tell the great stories of Liberation, Redemption, and Salvation. But for this to happen, we need a liberator, a redeemer, and a saviour. The story of Israel's liberation from slavery, redemption from oppression and sin, and salvation from death; all point to Christ who is our liberator, our redeemer, and our saviour. It also speaks to *these days* when we stand in the valley of death.

Even the very worst experiences of Israel taught them lessons they have never forgotten and changed them as a people. When they were liberated from slavery in Egypt, they celebrated the Passover. This experience changed them; before they were Hebrew Slaves, now they were Israelites. At the exile, they could not be Israelites, because they had no land of Israel; they became Jews, bound by a religion not a land. With no Temple, they returned with a Synagogue. After the Shoah, the holocaust, they returned to a new land in 1948.

My point is, *this is our Holocaust*. What are we going to take from this experience, what are we going to gain; what lessons might we learn?

Only **you** can answer that question; but as a way of example I will give these three thoughts:

Firstly, family and friends. Yes, I know we are cooped up, but not all of us. Some of us cannot be with our family today. I would hope that we might learn the importance of family life, of our friends, of being part of a living and praying community. If we have fallen out of touch for whatever reason, there has never been a better time to pick up the phone.

Secondly, the environment. Do we need to travel as much? Do we need all this international travel with its damage to the planet? Will we shop locally and support the local economy? Do we need everything we have?

I was struck by these words in our reading:

'Come, by corn without money. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy you?' (Isaiah 55)

We talk of the poor of spirit, or how our possessions, possess us. What if we could throw of this oppression? Why spend your money on what cannot satisfy you? Many of us are living on 80% and are having to make difficult decisions on what is essential. What if we chose to live on 80%, and give the extra to the poor, the needy, to those who really need it, rather than spending it on that which does not satisfy us.

What we do not need, while we waste of resources of our planet.

Thirdly, we cannot go back to the way things were. We rightly praise the NHS and those who work in essential jobs – those I called saints next door - Before this some of those jobs were considered mundane and menial – stacking shelves, cleaning wards, distributing goods.

Are we going to value them in the same way?

Are we going to reflect upon how we will value and reward our Saints next door?

Family, the environment, justice. Those are my three examples.

Are you going to seize this opportunity to have a new beginning?

What will this new life look like?

What will you change?

Why haven't you started already?