

Thought for the Day

Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Wednesday 9th September

1 Corinthians 7.25-31

'in view of the impending crisis', Paul gave some interesting advice. It's his personal advice, and it probably seems rather quaint or odd to us now; he told the Corinthians that if unmarried, they should not marry and if married, they should not change that. In fact he comes down on the side of remaining single as far as possible – but his reasons are not to do with sexual morality, not here at any rate. And that's not the point of the passage for us either.

His reasons were these. At the time he wrote, Paul expected the Lord Jesus to return any day – to return in glory, and for the course of history to stop, for the final judgement to take place. This was indeed an impending crisis.

It didn't happen at that time, and after a while Paul and other Christians began to adjust their ideas about the end of the world and to see that as more distant. Throughout history since then, there have been times when people have expected the end to come; at the year 1000 for example, or even the year 2000. None of the predicted times have been fulfilled so far. And Jesus in his own teaching warned us not to try and calculate the times and seasons. It's best for us not to know but simply to be ready all the time to give an account of ourselves before God. This is hard to do, and in some ways if we think it's going to happen say before the end of the week, we're a lot more likely to take it seriously and to put our house in order than if we think it is centuries off.

Well, this seems relevant to me today because since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic we have been living in unprecedented times. We have had a huge shock which has shaken the whole human community over the world and has had far reaching effects on all of us. Life has changed, and although many activities are resuming, they are not back to normal – nor is there any clear time when they will be. Instead there is a growing recognition that many things will not and perhaps ought not to return to how they used to be. This is a crisis. We are in crisis, as a whole world, as well as each country and community separately going through a crisis. So it's a time, like when Paul was writing to the Corinthian Christians, to reconsider everything about our lives. We have had to re-think how we do everything. How and if we go shopping, how and if we go to church, how we keep in touch with friends and family, how we spend our time, how we carry out our employment. It's all in flux.

That's both good and bad. It's good because it's an opportunity to re-evaluate our lifestyle, our activities, our priorities, and to make changes.

It's potentially bad because it feels insecure and worrying and for some people the anxiety it throws up is problematic.

Paul urged his friends in Corinth to put first things first; their commitment to Christ must come first and the details of daily life mattered less because they would soon cease. 'For ' he said, 'the present form of the world is passing away.' And we could say that now; the present form or the form of the world, of life, as it has been, is passing away. We are now familiar with the phrase 'the new normal' although no-one really knows what that is, since change is still continuing.

It is an insecure time. But as Paul urged, we need to find our security, our anchor, in Christ, in God, not in those daily details which are so fragile, we find, so subject to flux. We need not fear, as Psalm 46 says, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the midst of the sea. Why should we not fear? Because 'God is in the midst of us' it goes on. 'Be still, and know that I am God'.

I love that hymn 'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here'. There's a video on YouTube of Aled Jones singing it with beautiful landscapes in the background – I recommend you look it up and have a listen. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJMaOxdu6B4>

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort,
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*