

This Mothering Sunday we were going to have a couple of special services focusing on 'caring' with a particular encouragement to give thanks for Mums and all who care. It is a wonderful thing to say thank you to the people who we appreciate and who play a part in helping us in life - whether that is family members, friends, neighbours or whoever.

In services like what was planned I would go on to talk about the fact that the very best expressions of care that people give are a little picture of how much our Heavenly Father cares for us.

Although we can't meet currently as a congregation we need to know that hope.

Jesus is always reminding us that our Father God loves us so much and is always there for us. Our nation and so many places in the world have been thrown upside down by the Coronavirus. It is a very unsettling time. Who do we avoid? Where can we go? Caring becomes even more important at a time like this.

Know this: God cares. In the Bible 1 Peter 5:7 says: '*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*'. God is not laughing at us, mocking us, or withdrawing from us but is with us and is for us. We need more than ever to connect with God, spent time with God, talk to Him, read His Word, share questions, doubts and fears with Him.

There is talk of appropriate 'social distancing' as we try to minimize risk and it is right to do that, but don't distance yourself from God. Spiritual distancing only makes things worse. Whatever you feel about life, however things are going for you get close to God - He cares for you.

Also - we must care for one another. We have to do this responsibly but we are to care - in our homes and neighbourhoods and wherever. Caring changes and improves everything. We are not be defeated, demoralised and fearful but life giving and hope bringing.

The Archbishops are encouraging us to make this Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March a day of prayer. *Prayer is a very caring thing to do*. For many a candle will be lit in the window at 7pm on Sunday as a sign of solidarity and hope that the light of Christ can never be extinguished. Perhaps you may want to do that?

For seven days we are being encouraged to *pray every time we wash*. Perhaps say the Lord's Prayer. Or pray for the people around you. Be conscious of God and the difference He can make.

So it is not an easy time at all. But it is also an opportunity: to put 'caring' centre stage - and to put our trust in the God who cares and to know that in Jesus there is a glorious future.

*Romans 8: 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:*

*"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered"*

*37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demon, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Amen