



MAY 2020 Newsletter

Sarah's Message

Keeping Under Cover

I wonder how you are dealing with Covid physical distancing? I especially wonder how you are dealing with it if you are older or vulnerable and have been told to stay at home for 12 weeks?

If you live on your own, have you reached the point where you just want someone (anyone?) to pat your arm, hold your hand or give you a hug? If you live in shared accommodation, have you reached the point where you are under each other's feet and you wish you had silence and space? If you have no garden, are you dreaming of a little plot you could go to? If you have a garden, are you overwhelmed by the upkeep with mowing, pruning, blossom dropping and no brown bin collection?

Perhaps we can take encouragement from the story of Joseph in Genesis 39-40. Though he had done nothing wrong, he was in gaol for about 12 years, including 2 years when someone who should have done him a favour forgot! How did Joseph cope? He coped by doing his best to serve not just the gaoler, but also the other prisoners. He held onto God and built a relationship deep enough that he could discern what God was saying, by the power of the Spirit. It is good for us to do some daily exercise, it's good for us to try to ensure we don't snack too much but eat a balanced diet. But during this time, it's also good for us to spend time studying Scripture and in prayer to deepen our relationship with God, even as we seek wise ways to serve our neighbours the best way we can – even if that means staying at least 6' away and not offering a literal hand to them!

LOCKDOWN MONDAY

How did the apostles feel on the first Easter Monday? The joy of seeing Jesus again had replaced the despair and guilt of the previous two days but when they awoke, they must have wondered "What now?" Jesus had risen but would they ever see Him again and how would this affect their lives? What did it all mean?

On the previous evening, Jesus had given them the commission to go but where were they to go? He had breathed His Spirit on them but how was He to direct them? As far as we can tell they remained in a sort of lockdown for the next week with their doors closed lest the city authorities find and perhaps execute them. One of their number was not even present when Jesus had appeared and he remained sceptical of their witness.

In reality, they were experiencing the "green shoots" of God's post-resurrection plan. Gradually, restrictions were lifted somewhat. At some point in the next forty days they must have emerged into Jerusalem society, Resumed their worship in the Temple and spoken about their meeting with the risen Christ but we cannot be certain how much they did this. As they met with Him in different ways and in different places they may have felt that the restrictions were being lifted but the future remained a bit obscure. Jesus clarified their minds through His pre-Pentecost teaching about the Kingdom of God but they probably wondered when their old freedom would return and where it would lead them

Pentecost saw the total lifting of the lockdown. The Spirit enabled them to proclaim what they now understood about Jesus' mission. It would take them ultimately to the ends of the earth. We are wondering when the present situation will end and what the future will be. The New Testament shows us that whatever changes may come, God is in control and He will lead us as He did the apostles.

Rev.Fred Stainthorpe