

## **Trinity 4 (yr A) 2020 – The Journey!**

Isn't it strange how these past months whilst we have been restricted to our homes, we nonetheless feel as though we have been on a journey like none of us have been on before?

It has been a bit of a roller coaster ride with things seeming to change ever other day and our emotions bashed about as though they were James Bond's favourite drink - shaken not stirred.

We have had moments when we have been busier than ever and others when everything seems to have stopped and we have had nothing to do. Many of us have found that our worries have escalated these past three months and we have encountered even more problems than before. But there have also been some positive things to come out of this time too. In some cases we may have had feelings coming to the surface that we have been suppressing for years, and even though these may have felt unnerving, they may well prove to be one of the better things that this time has gifted us.

During the journey you have been on so far, have you had moments where you felt as though someone or something may be speaking into your heart, encouraging you? Have you felt that strange feeling of excitement mixed with fear?

During lockdown, many people have been re-evaluating what is important in their lives. Lots of people have said that they have found more space and time to just sit, reflect and observe. They have re-found a love of nature, community, family. Walking in the countryside, reading more and praying more. Many, many people have said that they have been praying often for their loved ones and for the world. Lots of people say that they

have felt more spiritual or more in touch with God in some way during this time. Have you?

The Christian experience from start to finish is a journey of faith. Sometimes we travel like a juggernaut through the terrain barely noticing what is around us. But just occasionally we are able to stop, observe and think. We have just been afforded one of those moments.

Each of us have been on a journey, but it isn't a journey which began at lockdown, it is a journey which began before we were born, for God loved us even before we were in our mother's womb. God communicates with us somewhere deep down in our soul. We cannot intellectualise it; it has been a part of each of us since before we were formed. None of us have the vocabulary to explain it, and yet we know God is there speaking into our hearts his still small voice of encouragement and reassurance. All we can do is continue on the journey until we find our rest in him. 'Come to me all who are heaven laden and I will give you rest', Jesus Says.

The problem is, we so often put barriers in the way to hinder that journey. Maybe we feel embarrassed or silly. Maybe we don't want our friends to know what we are feeling or thinking. We may have a sceptical spouse or a family who we don't wish to inconvenience. We might be going through a difficult time in our personal lives. We might be anxious, fearful or resentful that to follow God too openly will inconvenience our routines. These are just a few of the many barriers we tend to put in the way to pursuing God's peace and finding a stillness at our core that can only be found in him.

But we can't drive with the handbrake on, otherwise we will not get to where we need to go and we will burn out in the process.

I once heard of a story of some nuns who were on a car journey.

They were travelling carefully along a motorway, when out of nowhere a police car appeared with sirens flashing, signalling to them to pull over.

The policeman got out of the car and said to the driver: “Sister, this is a 70 MPH motorway — why are you going so slow?”

The nun replied: “Sir, I saw a lot of signs that said M22, not 70.”

The policeman responded: “Oh sister, that’s not the speed limit, that’s the name of the motorway you are on!”

“Oh! Silly me!” said the nun. “Thanks for letting me know. I’ll be more observant in future.”

At this point the policeman looked in the backseat where the other nuns were all shaking and trembling with fear.

“Excuse me, Sister”, said the policeman, “but what’s wrong with your friends in the back? They’re shaking something terrible.”

“Oh” said the nun, “we just got off of M119.”

Being observant on a journey is really important, even more so now that the pace of life is beginning to pick up again. Long journeys can be especially difficult and if you don’t put in enough rest stops, you can find yourself losing your ability to concentrate on what’s around you. You might even end up falling asleep at the wheel. Not only is this dangerous, but you can also miss the beauty of the journey itself. Which of us hasn’t made a journey only to arrive at our destination and have no memory of the route we’ve just taken?

So planning in rest stops is really important. They help us to refresh and nourish ourselves, to rest a little, to reflect on the journey so far and to think about the journey ahead. We may even be able to explore some of the features of the next stage of our journey so that we are better prepared. Only then are we in the best possible place to set off towards our final destination.

Church is our rest stop! As we journey on through life, it is important that we take adequate breaks when we are consciously in God's presence so that we can rest, refresh, nourish, reflect and explore for ourselves. Just attending at Christmas and Easter aren't enough anymore than not stopping between Edinburgh and London would be. If that is our regular practice, then is it any wonder that we come off the road occasionally?

We so often put limitations on how much we trust God. Are we simply scared to let God take control in case we end up believing in him too much? Or are we simply worried that our lives may have to change too much as a result of the journey he will take us on?

God is faithful and if we trust in him completely, he will never leave us. And we must do our bit to keep the relationship strong. We must trust him so completely that we are not afraid to put ourselves in situations of trouble or danger as though he won't follow through with his promises.

Christ-likeness and heaven is your final destination, but your journey to get there will last a lifetime.

We know that God is love and during this time of pandemic many of us have relied on that to get us through as we have said prayers for our families, friends, communities, the world and ourselves. If you know God loves you, why would you question where he wants you to go? His way

will always be the right way and the best. It may change your life in unimaginable ways.

Jeremiah the prophet has a few words of encouragement for us. 'For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord. Plans of peace and not evil, to give you a future and a hope'.

So when you feel God leading you just follow. Don't delay, just obey!

The journey God leads us on may not always seem easy. The world is not an easy place. Following God won't remove you from the troubles of the world, but it might help you to deal with them in a revolutionary way. For Jesus states in John's Gospel, 'I have said these things to you that you may have peace. In the world you may have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome these things.'