

OUT AND ABOUT

I have to confess that few TV programmes catch my attention BUT the BBC's *"The Repair Shop"* is fascinating watching on Wednesday evening. People bring their old, broken or damaged treasures to where a group of expert craftsmen and women led by Jay Blades work to restore them. It is astonishing to see what they are able to do. What is just as interesting is how people bring things because of the memories they hold of Mom and Dad and other loved ones. Frequently when presented with the repaired object people will well up or burst into tears. Sometimes that makes watching from the sofa somewhat difficult too.

The programme makes me realise how **the church is God's Repair Shop** in our community. There is no greater expert at repairing broken lives than the Lord Jesus Christ and He has called us to assist Him in the repair work. Constantly it is a reminder that losing loved ones is not something you just get used to. That is why Dame Vera Lynn's great song *"We'll meet again"* resonates so much. The Gospel message we proclaim enables us to say that death does not have the last word. Jesus came to redeem us from sin and will one glorious day when He comes back bring about a glorious re-union with our loved ones who have known Him as their Saviour. Be ready for that day by ensuring He is your Saviour and Lord here and now.

EXTRACTS FROM MY MAGAZINES

The brutal murder in India of Kande Mudu (aged 27 years) in Jarkhand in June. His was the only Christian family in the village as they faced fierce local opposition. Mudu was dragged away from family prayers, attacked and then his throat slit as his wife and two daughters pleaded for his life.

In another incident arsonists destroyed the church in Tamil Nadu State in the early hours of June 15 leaving it as only a burnt out shell. **(Barnabas Fund)**

Can you believe this Censorship in the USA ? Instagram removed a worship video from its site citing it as a violation of *"community standards"* saying it contains *"harmful information for the public"*. Yet a film called *"Habit"* portrays Jesus as a female romantic foil for another woman and is nothing more than an active attack on the Lord Jesus Christ. What a crazy world we live in!

Finally. Sorry no word yet as to when we will be back together in Church. **DPS**

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to
CHURCH AT HOME
Sunday 23rd August 2020

THE JOURNEY

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11 am

HYMN CP 486 (to read or sing)

Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither.
One here will constant be
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent,
His first avowed intent,
To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound,
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright,
He'll with a giant fight,
But he will have the right
To be a pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
Can daunt his spirit.
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away !
He'll fear not what men may say,
He'll labour night and day,
To be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan 1628-88
(It has been a very long time since we sang this)

(It would be good if you said this prayer out aloud)

*O Lord God our glorious, gracious, heavenly Father
You alone are worthy to be praised.*

*Thank You for Jesus He is a wonderful Saviour
Thank you for what He did for us upon the cross of Calvary.
Give us the strength and the faith to trust You more
and follow You faithfully no matter what.*

AMEN

You may like to say the Lord's prayer also.

BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Psalm 84

" with a heart set on a pilgrimage"

THE JOURNEY

How do you describe life? It has been said that the mind of man is a picture gallery so various metaphors occur again and again in our literature, art and music. They help to express and form a kind of basis as to the way we see life. Tennyson wrote his beautiful poem "*Crossing the bar*" seeing life as a voyage to a distant haven. (*You will have heard me recite it at funeral services*) Some see life as a battle - Hamlet's soliloquy "*To be and not to be*" as he speaks about the "*the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*". Others see only "*the storms of life*" Job says "*my days are swifter than a weavers shuttle*" (*Job 7:6*). Shakespeare "*all the world's a stage and we are just players on it*". So I ought to try and master the script before the final curtain comes down.

For myself I often describe life as a **journey** with all its twist and turns, its detours, wrong roads, its hold ups and side streets. Almost inevitably in funeral eulogies I will endeavour to recount the journey someone has taken. When folk talk with me and we reminisce I tell them I have experienced a most remarkable journey. On reflection I follow the pilgrim in Psalm 84 who has the map of Jerusalem written on his heart. as he makes his way to fulfil the responsibility of journeying to the feasts so as to remember his responsibility to God.

As the Psalmist thinks about the journey he recalls the wonder, joy and thrill of being in the Temple courts "*appearing before God in Zion*" (v1) But what about NOW as he finds himself in a valley named Baca. Baca was a name for a tree or shrub that grows in arid, dry, barren places Baca is

Balsam tree - the sap oozes out of the tree like tears. Baca valley is a name for any difficult, painful place in life. It is the experience that makes things seem and feel hopeless. So for the Psalmist it is going to be a hard climb to get up and out of this place if the pilgrim is going to reach Mount Zion. All too often Baca lies in your way (just like now with the lockdown). you cannot go round it, you are in it. Yet as the people who love God we expect to pass **through** this valley and not remain there. In its own strange way it will provide a blessing from the experience.

How and why? Because we will be -

1. SATISFIED with God (1-4)

Do not allow the valley to hem you in and cause you to lose your perspective. The Psalmist is thrilled with the moment when the valley will be behind him. You do not stay here, the struggle can be managed. Others have made it "*blessed be those who dwell in Your house THEY are ever praising You*" (v4) **SO WILL I !**. Today's society is noisy and confused. cars pass by and the music is thunderous, its entertainment devastating and explosive. BUT we know something special and unique - God's grace which is continuous. Always available, wherever you are. It is right there at the door of your heart - flowing, waiting for you to let it in, so it can take you through and on your way.

2 STRENGTHENED by God (5-8)

"blessed are those whose strength is in You"

Your own stamina is not enough so keep moving on. You know it will be a difficult climb out of the valley but keep going on. Be determined "*trust in Him at all times*"(*Psalm 62:8*). We know we are not alone. He has promised "*I will never leave you or forsake you*" (*Hebrews 13:5*) Make this valley become a blessing "*make it a place of springs*" (v6) One day Baca will be behind you "*Go from strength to strength until each appears in Zion*" (v7)

3. SURROUNDED with God (10-12)

Times may have been tough and so very difficult but God has a place waiting for you. Even if it is only as "*a doorkeeper in the house of my God*" Just look at the phrases and titles - God the One who is a sun, a shield, One who bestows favour and honour, the living God, , my King and my God, Lord of hosts - the One with power. He gives grace for all the journey down here and glory at the end (v11).

Oh my ! what a journey.!