

Making the most of this time

To state the obvious we live in strange times!

Lent is traditionally regarded as a time for reflection and contemplation. Holy Week is a time to reflect upon the events in the immediate build up to that first Easter time. It is also a time to consider our relationship with God in Jesus the Christ. How close is our relationship with God? How has it changed from this time last year: has it grown deeper or have we become less committed to God and his will?

Very often in life we have a desire to accomplish something but we never seem to find the time to do it. Often I wish that I would spend more time in prayer and Bible study, more time seeking God's face. If only I could find the time! Now part of that is a failure on my part to use all the time wisely. BUT often it is life, ministry, family that takes a chunk out of the day. I don't wish to lump you all in with me but I would be surprised if at least some of you found did not have similar situations and frustrations.

This brings me back to the strange times in which we are living. The situation is not good, the dangers are real, the sense of being cut off from family, friends, church, the world can have an adverse effect on our on outlook on life. BUT now we have that opportunity for which we have longed. We have time to do those things we have always wanted to do. We have time to draw close to God and to deepen our relationship with him. It would be sad if, at the end of all this social distancing, lockdown, travel restrictions, etc., we discovered we had wasted the time, wasted the opportunity to seek God more earnestly than ever before.

The gospels all tell of Jesus clearing the Temple. Matthew, Mark and Luke place this event clearly in Holy Week. Jesus' concern was that the selling and money-changing was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles. This was the only place in the Temple where a Gentile (non-Jew) could enter and pray. BUT such prayer was being made almost impossible by the noise and hubbub caused by all the sellers and money-changers, and their customers who were seeking to buy an acceptable lamb or goat to sacrifice, and to obtain the appropriate coinage to pay the Temple tax. Jesus reminded those present that this was his Father's house and was designated as a place of prayer. [see Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11; Matthew 21:12 - 13] The reference to a '**den of robbers**' indicating the exorbitant fees charged by the sellers and money-lenders. Jesus was seeking to return the Court of the Gentiles to its proper function, allowing Gentiles to grow nearer to God.

Does Jesus need to do that to us? Remove all the distractions to allow us to concentrate on our relationship with God? Is not this a glorious opportunity to allow him to do so? This strange time is our chance to turn our Bible reading into Bible study; our habitual prayers into a time of real prayer; our quiet times from a few minutes into a time of dwelling in God's presence.

I pray that God will inspire and empower you to do so. BUT FIRST I pray that he will inspire and empower ME to do so!!

May God bless each one of us in this endeavour!

Yours in Christ,

Douglas