

TOGETHER

only physically apart

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent

Locked Doors?

From John 20:19 and Acts 16

Last week the lectionary considered the appearance of Jesus to Thomas and thought last week, through Spring Harvest at Home, folk have been engaging with the New Testament Church in Acts. I've been struck, through these about God's relationship with locked doors.

Perhaps, right now, you feel like you're locked in; the government were at great pains, at the beginning to avoid using the phrase 'lockdown' as it can have the effect of making us all feel rather trapped - like prisoners in our own homes. Perhaps we can better now relate to both the John 20 disciples ('with the doors locked for fear') and Paul in Acts 16 ('thrown into prison'). Like these New Testament 'Christians' we are not able to freely pursue our faith at present, and yet God remains un-thwarted by the locked doors.

Firstly, in John 20, 'Jesus [comes] and [stands] among them [saying], "Peace be with you!"' I'm sure they needed peace - Jesus must have seemed like a ghost! I just love the way that despite their fear and how it had trapped them, God still has a plan - the father sends Jesus to them with the express mission of sending them out!

Secondly, in Acts 16, as Paul and Silas are locked up in prison and carefully guarded, we see that their incarceration does not dampen their faith! Indeed they spend their time 'praying and singing hymns to God'. Thank God that we can still pray and sing hymns - even in isolation! Furthermore, God again demonstrates that locked doors are not capable of holding back the Kingdom of God. "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose."

Let me tell you with all confidence, our isolation is not sufficient to hold back the Kingdom of God! Nor does the lockdown keep you from the presence of Christ. We know by what we reading scripture and by faith that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:31ff). My prayer for you this week is that as we wait for God to shake our prisons and loose our chains, we will know the presence of Christ in our locked rooms. I pray that by the power of God's Holy Spirit, we will *know* and *feel* God's presence with us. And if you are finding your faith tested, if you are feeling doubt or struggling to see God in all this, know that even our doubts won't keep us from God - after all, Thomas was in that locked room and in God's grace and mercy, despite him probably having many unanswered questions, his doubts were settled in the presence of Christ.



1. Circuit Services

Tune in for 'Worship Wednesday' (led by Revd. Nathan Falla) and our various Sunday worship opportunities. They'll all be hosted on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF-CBiFzWL81CUJrKjC1Psw>) and details will also be on the 'NewarkandSouthwellMethodist' FaceBook Page (which can be accessed without a FaceBook account - [Click Here](#)).

2. TV Services

Sunday Worship BBC One, [LINK](#)
10:45am, A service from Hereford Cathedral led by the bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, with hymns recorded for Songs of Praise in 2017. The service was filmed before the closure of all church buildings.

3. Radio Services

Sunday 19th April (Also [online](#).)
BBC Radio 4: 8:10am, Prof Jennifer Strawbridge and the Rev Dr Steve Nolan explore the place of hope in times of despair. They reflect on the Road to Emmaus and how it speaks to us today.

4. Spring Harvest Home

If you didn't get the chance last week, can i recommend the wealth of online material from Spring Harvest - it's all available to watch back at your leisure and can be found on their YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/SpringHarvest.

If all this this baffles you - call me or email: peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk.



Where's Jesus?

Luke 24.13-35

I love puzzles and one Christmas a friend bought me the book 'Finding Jesus', by Winston Rowntree which is basically Where's Wally but instead the search is for Jesus. In each picture (like the above) Jesus is guaranteed to be present, and yet he's sometimes hard to spot! (Tip - he's always waving! Or perhaps offering a blessing!)



Two disciples walk back from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. They are in despair about the death of Jesus. Jesus appears and walks beside them, but they do not recognise him. He teaches them from the Scriptures but they only see who he is when he breaks bread with them. I wonder, how present you feel Christ is, with you, during lockdown; scripture tells us that Christ is always with us (Matthew 28:20). Perhaps, then, the more important question is not whether he is present but, 'are you noticing Him?'

Perhaps the lowest point in my life, so far, was my final year in teaching. During that year I was completing a candidate's portfolio for Methodist ministry, completing my Local Preacher studies and teaching a difficult year 2 class, full time. It was a load that ultimately led me to taking several weeks off school with stress. At one point I sat at the dinner table with our kids (just two at that point!) with my head on the table and my eldest asked her mum, "Is Dad asleep?" I had my head down exhausted, swamped and unable to see a way out. I was

falling apart. It was only in the two year's following that I could see God using that time to usher me into ministry. God didn't create those difficulties but looking back he was with me throughout. During that time we grew closer as a family and I learnt more about the value of my wonderfully supportive wife. I also learnt that I cannot do everything and that it's okay not to be okay. The words of a Casting Crowns song 'Just be held' were encouraging. One particular lyric still stays with me, **"Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place - just be held."** I can see God beside me throughout, as I look back.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Looking back on our experiences we can often better understand them and even spot things that, at the time, were not obvious to us but now are. Think back for a moment to a time of crisis, one which at the time seemed inescapable. Perhaps you have a testimony of how God was with you through that time. Perhaps at the time you did not realise it but Christ was walking alongside you at that time. But how does looking back help us to see God now?

Well, much of the Old Testament chronicles the journey of the Israelites (who became the Jewish people) and includes God instructing them to remember and to tell their story. There is the passover - that great feast of remembrance (Exodus 12), there are the rocks laid in the Jordan (Joshua 4) to show the safe passage towards the promised land, and of course we had instituted our own act of remembrance in the last supper (Mark 14) - now our service of Holy Communion. Have you ever wondered why God emphasises this so much? Remembering is important. I think it's because I think God knows that we struggle to see him in times of crisis. I think God wants us to build up a bank of times when we remember his goodness and faithfulness in times of trouble so that when we next find ourselves isolated and distant (or seemingly so) we can remind ourselves that God is not distant and we are never isolated from him.

Take a moment. Remind yourselves of the wonderful times in scripture where God's faithfulness has been proven. Consider again the times when God has been faithful to you in the past. Now wonder for a moment, where is God being faithful now? **Where is God in all this?** Actually, let me re-punctuate that: **Where is God? In all this!**



Prayer space

This space is designed to unite us in prayer. Why not spend a little time in prayer at 7pm each evening and light a candle in a prominent window to show the community that you are praying.

Specific prayer requests (or requests to join the SMC prayer chain) can be sent to Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.

Prayer for a pandemic

More prayers at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/prayers-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between
Preserving their health or making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for
Our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those who have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money
In the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country,
Let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically
Wrap our arms around each other,
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace
Of God to our neighbours.

Amen.

From the Diocese of Oxford Mother's Union
(Provided by Janet Denis)

Prayer points:

1. Pray for those ill with Coronavirus, especially those alone and isolated and their loved ones who cannot visit.
2. Pray for the bereaved at this time, many of whom are planning funerals with many constraints. Pray also for funeral directors and clergy as they do their best to support and accommodate folk in difficult times.
3. Pray for the NHS, for much needed supplies and protection over front line staff and their families.
4. Pray for the government, that they will be wise and brave when needed.
5. Pray for all key-workers and their families as they continue to serve us and keep much needed infrastructures going.
6. Pray for church leaders as they try to find ways to connect folk and provide spiritual support.

Hymns and songs to reflect on...

And can it be (StF 345) [LINK](#)

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer (StF 465) [LINK](#)

Just be held (Casting Crowns) [LINK](#)

Blessed Assurance (StF 548) [LINK](#)

Thine be the Glory (StF 313) [LINK](#)

Click 'LINK's to access YouTube clips of each song.

Help for the isolated

Elston residents, if you need support during the lockdown please contact the Good Neighbourhood Group through Sandra Wright on 07773 689736 or Linda Fitzgerald on 0798937115.

The Sutton-on-Trent Buddies Corona Virus Helpline is up and running - for help of any kind the number to ring is 01636 351615. or email suttonbuddy@outlook.com

Southwell Town Council can provide support by calling 07874780931, 07874780932 or 01636816103.

North Muskham's Buddy Scheme can be reached by contacting Andy Willey on 07967138724 or muskhambuddyscheme@yahoo.com.

If you would like to volunteer you should also make contact using the above details.

Giving

A number of folk have enquired about how they can give to the work of the church in these times. Of course for those who give by standing order or bank transfer, giving will continue but for this who give using the offertory plate or envelope, this is not possible at present. Your giving is still greatly needed and appreciated (and remain part of your act of worship) so may I encourage you to continue to give, perhaps by putting the envelopes on one side until such as time as we are able to present them in our next gathering of worship.

Keep in Touch

There will be lots of opportunities to keep in touch during this time, not least by picking up the phone, to each other, or giving me a call (Rev Peter: 01636812166) or sending an email (peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk). Can I recommend the Newark and Southwell Methodist Church FaceBook page to you in particular. It's an open page so it's available to all and you needn't be on FaceBook to view it. You can access it at [facebook.com/NewarkandSouthwellMethodist/](https://www.facebook.com/NewarkandSouthwellMethodist/). Don't worry if you're not a member of Southwell Methodist Church, we're all in this together!

Also, spread the word to anyone you think would appreciate receiving this newsletter. Let them know of our FaceBook pages and if you come across someone who might benefit from receiving it please get in touch.



22-4-20

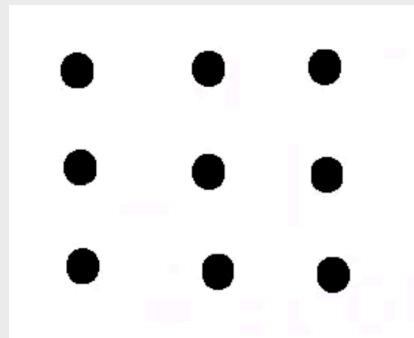
Families:

families4SMC@gmail.com

Read the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13-35. (or you can watch an animated version of the story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wR4xhA4Mb6A>)

Family Challenge:

You will need paper and pens to take part in the 'Nine Dots, Four Lines' challenge. Draw the nine dots as a grid of 3 rows of 3 dots (see below). Now, your challenge is to connect all nine dots by drawing 4 straight lines without lifting your pen or pencil from the paper.



Give up?! The solution can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqWIFPTM5v8>

The key to solving this puzzle is to look at it differently!

In today's reading the disciples were walking back to Emmaus after the death and burial of Jesus; they were feeling lost and confused. When Jesus died, his followers thought that he was gone forever. They were very sad and didn't know what to do. They couldn't see things clearly because they were so mixed up and upset. Then a stranger joined them who helped them to see their situation in a new way and they were amazed at what they heard and saw. Suddenly they saw clearly what they hadn't seen before even though they had been looking right at it most of the day. They realised that the stranger who had joined them on the road was really Jesus - alive and well. After Jesus left them, they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

Craft activity:

The men on the road to Emmaus were upset because Jesus was dead, but then when they realised that it was all part of God's plan they were happy again. Often – both in the Bible and in our own lives – it can look as if God has made a mistake and that everything has gone wrong: but then we see God's plan unfold! Examples include Jonah in a fish, Daniel in a lions' den, Lazarus in his tomb....

Choose one of these events and draw a picture of it on paper, or maybe build it out of lego or junk modelling. Alternatively you could draw an event from your own lives where you have felt upset and as if God has deserted you. Across the bottom of the picture you could write, "God is always working out his plan! He is always in control!"

Prayer

As a family, talk about how you've been able to see Jesus in surprising places during this strange time. Thank God for this.

Reassure your children that Jesus is always with them, even when they can't see him, even when they feel scared and confused just like the disciples did after Jesus death. Ask Jesus to draw close.

See if your children can spot Jesus in the 'Where's Jesus?' picture (p2). He is always there, even when it feels hard to see him. AMEN!!!