

Thoughts from the Manse 24th July 2020

As I was preparing the prayers for worship on Sunday, I reflected upon how on the one hand Covid 19 has pulled the world together whilst at the same time it has torn the world apart. We are all in this together, around the world families are suffering as loved ones struggle with the disease and far too many sadly die.



As I thought about how to image this, I thought of a loaf of bread made up of many different rolls drawn together in the baking, the sort of loaf often described as a tear and share. A loaf of bread is often used as a symbol of oneness at communion, we are all part of the body of Christ symbolised by the loaf of bread.

However, the experience of Covid 19 has been vastly different depending on your personal circumstances but more importantly where you live. In the UK we are blessed with a health service that, whilst under enormous pressure, has been able to offer the best care possible and many have lived to tell their tale of appreciation. The same cannot be said in many countries now ravaged by the pandemic. There is an inequality of health care around the world and we are used to seeing heart-breaking photos of people walking tens of miles to see a doctor in a clinic which bears little resemblance to what we would expect of a clinic. The care offered there is the best care possible, and the medics are as heartbroken as we the onlookers are as they try to offer hope. The pandemic is only highlighting what was already the case, but it is tearing the world apart.

The effects of injustice are often war and terror as people recognise the unfairness of their circumstances and fight for change. We have seen photos of India, and South American countries where injustice forces people into poverty and despair and this too is tearing the world apart. However, in many of these countries dictatorship and power scoring are playing an even bigger part in the fuelling the pandemic and we have all seen news reports of statements we find unbelievable, and not always from developing countries! We might suspect that things could have been handled better by our own government but to see leaders deny any problem and make ridiculous statements about how to deal with the virus is astonishing in the face of the world experience of the virus. These things too are tearing the world apart.



As Christians, we care for our fellow humans, wherever they live and want every human to have equal opportunity to experience life in all its fullness. We know that as long as injustice is a reality this can not be the case and so we pray for an end to injustice, and end to inequality and an end to power scoring at the cost of human lives. Alongside our concern we pledge our commitment to play a part in changing the world and bringing closer the Kingdom of love.



Watching the news during the pandemic I have been struck by an example of inequality present on our screens night after night within the UK. Government announcements from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all be accompanied by a person signing for those who cannot hear. The British government has not seen the need to do this and to me this says a lot about their approach to government. The other three nations have shown inclusivity of care, and a valuing of all people. One of the factors reported during these latter stages of the pandemic has been bad communication of information, partly mixed messages but also a lack of awareness of the level of English within some communities which has meant not everyone has understood even the mixed messages. If we cannot make sure that the message is accessible to all then the communication will never be effective.

There are many things we will learn from our experience of the pandemic, if we truly pray 'thy Kingdom come' then we must endeavour to prevent inequality, injustice, dictators and power scoring from tearing our oneness apart.