

PSALMS OF HOPE

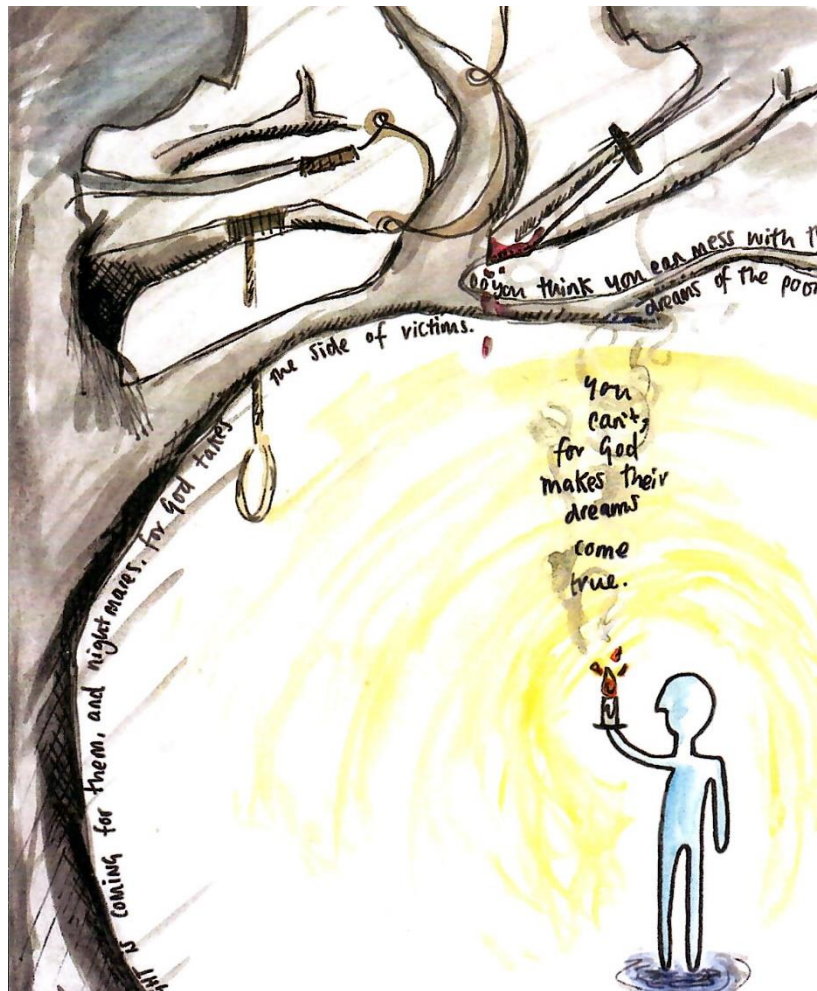
@UnitedChurchFerdown

United Church Ferndown's 2023 Lent Programme

Wednesday 15th March

Reflection #22

DO YOU FORGET?



Pray:

My LORD: thank you that nothing is hidden from you. You know our thoughts from afar, you search our minds and know our all our anxieties. You know me so much better than I know myself. You see all the grime and rubbish that swirls inside me and around me and which I get caught up in, tripping up and flaying around like a ship in a storm-force gale. Yet even through my failings and flaying you don't give up on me, you don't leave me to flounder and fall. Thank you that by your grace you forgive me and counsel me, you teach me and, most wonderfully, you provide me with a new horizon, a new hope and a new beginning. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Introduction:

Certainty is a strong word when used in any context. Who can say they are absolutely certain about anything? Conjecture can lead to conviction as easily as conspiracy can take us to chaos. David's opening words of this short psalm offer us a warning. Our journey of Lent and the daily verses chosen rarely start with the words 'The fool'. Yet beginning from a position of certainty in any project is foolish and must 'certainly' be avoided. Having all the answers to someone who asks you deep questions, saying the first thing that comes into your mind, or rebuking a friend without having the complete picture, can all cause us to stumble. Unlike the fool, it is pointless having a mind if you are not prepared to change it.

**Read:****Psalm 14:1-2 (NIV)**

The fool says in his heart,
'There is no God.'
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.
The Lord looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.

Consider:

Have you ever taken up a project and considered that you may be one of the least equipped people to tackle this challenge? You are possibly doing yourself a disservice, for if you don't consider yourself completely unqualified then you probably shouldn't take it up anyway. The opposite of course could be termed as arrogance or pride. So, it was with a mixture of inadequacy and expectation that I lined up for my first ultra challenge in 2019, unprepared and undercooked. But with a conviction that around 74% of people who start this journey actually cross the finishing line, I began in the 'hope' that I would not be with the 26% who, for whatever reasons, didn't complete the challenge. It wasn't my training that would determine whether I got there, but it was my faith in the mass of humanity around me on this joint venture who would propel the gathered throng to our ultimate destination.

Standing up for something you believe in isn't easy, especially when others are questioning you. The pilgrimage of Lent isn't supposed to be easy, and the journey can become tough. David cries out many times in the Psalms, looking at what is happening around him and becoming frustrated at the ambivalent nature of men and women who reject the word of God. This will happen to each one of us. We shall have times when we find it hard to believe, hard to pray, hard to be motivated, hard to stand up, yet we are not like this forever. The rest of today's psalm brings hope: verse 5b, 'God is present in the company of the righteous'. We need to be called among those who stand firm and are not easily swayed. Commentating on this psalm, Charles Spurgeon said: 'If God has made you upright, stand upright and be a man.' In the 1990 race there were many occasions when I felt like giving up – it was easier than carrying on – but I'm very pleased I persevered.

Pray:

Pray today that we will be able to give time to thought and consideration; to waiting and listening; then allow God to break through in these times of hesitation, allowing us to hear his voice clearly and with clarity.

Try it out:

Have as many meaningful conversations today as possible – consciously seek them out. When you do, try as best you can to be a listener. Try not to solve someone else's dilemma, but show them that you are taking in what they are saying, and avoid responding with your own personal experiences. Be a listener, not a talker.