

Fellowship – a source of strength

- Revd Kit Gunasekera

I would like to start with this short video I came across.

I like the way how, either the mother or the father, insists on not sticking to the highway code – they know where they are going thank you very much!

It must have been quite an exciting experience for the chicks - who would have some memorable tales to tell growing up, when they brought the traffic to a stop on a busy high street! But you get the feeling that they were safe, even though they are potentially in danger.

In our 2nd reading, its sheep who are being led on an adventure. They are led out of the sheep pen by the Shepherd.

The sheep pen is where the sheep spend the night, it's a safe place. But in the morning, the Shepherd comes, and takes them out, to roam the land, find food to graze on, explore and have an adventure, and then at night, He brings them back safely.

Those of you who can multitask, and like to draw, why don't you have a go at drawing a picture of the sheep, with the gate being open, and them going out. You can base it on the picture on the screen if you like- or use your imagination. You only have 8 mins or so, so get cracking. Later you have the chance to show us, by holding it to the screen, but you don't have to!

Jesus says "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me"

He comes and leads us out, to find pasture, and food, to care for us, so we can have an adventure or two! So that we can live the most amazing life – He calls it so that we can have **life to the full!**

Bishop Richard in his weekly video asks - how when many people are surrounded by anxiety and worry at this time, and suffering considerable loss, and bearing grief, how do we find the fullness of life in the midst of these challenging times?

Which brings us to the gate.

In our reading, Jesus, says "I am the gate". He is the gate, by which the sheep leave the sheep pen. He is the gate, to life in all its fullness!

Jane Williams, who is very clever – “The wood of the gate, reminds us, of the wood of the cross.”

Bishop Richard, goes on to say – the gate way into that fullness of life, is the sacrificial love which Jesus showed us, through his death and resurrection. That is what brings hope in the midst of the deepest adversity.

In our 1st reading, we find, a group of people, the early church, who have entered through this gate of love.

Some of the words which describe their amazing life are:

Filled with awe

Wonder

Glad

Sincere hearts

Praising God

Enjoying favour

Saved

Increasing in number

Sounds like they are having a great time. Yet, most of these people were poor, felt unsafe and did not have much control over their lives.

There are two other words – devoted and fellowship. They were devoted to the fellowship.

Jill and I have been watching Grantchester. And we are now in series 4. And a new vicar has come. And his opening sermon, is called fellowship.

He says:

Most of you are strangers to me.

In time, I hope we can become friends.

I hope we can help and guide each other.

I am going to need every bit of guidance, perhaps even more than you.

In God’s eyes, fellowship, is a form of love.

Strong as a bond between a parent and a child.

Fellowship is a constant.

A comfort.

A source of strength, in a world that can be complicated, frightening.

2 are better than 1,

For if they fall, the 1 will lift up their fellow.

We can lift up each other.

We are living in a time that is complicated and frightening.

But, we are seeing examples of people lifting each other. Helping each other. Some are well known like Captain, or now colonel Tom. Others are known just to us.

We have found that here on a Sunday and on a Wednesday - and through the week, sharing thoughts and encouragements; in the emails, texts, and telephone calls.

I see the smiles of people who bring food to donate to the foodbank – and I see love and a desire for fellowship.

Although, at this time, we cannot go through those doors and gates we dream about, we can however be free in our minds and in our thinking and in our spirits and in our hearts.

Jesus said – if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed!

As Bishop Richard says – the fullness of life is found in us living in a loving relationship with God, with each other, and with our planet.

The cross is the place where we let go of our own interest and look to the interests of others. It's a demonstration of love. May we choose to walk through this gate, that leads to life to the full!

Amen