

Worship at Home 17th May 2020 G Pentelow

“The Restless Rush of Days”

Before you get too comfortable, I'm going to ask you to do something. Go to your door, step outside and simply listen for a minute before you come back inside.

Opening words

“God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.”

To God we come;
to worship, to pray, to learn and to receive.
We come with our fears and our failings, but
trusting in God, our Rock and our Redeemer.
And as we share together, even over distance
and time, bless us and feed us we pray.
Amen

All my Days (Beautiful Saviour) StF 343

Video link <https://youtu.be/m3ILdnift8c>

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
For in my helplessness You heard my cry,
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails;
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
Of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all.*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades;
Where countless worshippers will share one
song,
And cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

Beautiful Saviour...

Scripture

*During this short service we will be using Psalm
46, broken into separate sections.*

Also this familiar story of Martha and Mary....

Luke 10 v 38-42 (from *The Message*)³⁸⁻⁴⁰ *As they continued their travel, Jesus entered a village. A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. “Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand.”*

⁴¹⁻⁴² *The Master said, “Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and won't be taken from her.”*

Part 1

I have had this phrase going around in my head recently – “The restless rush of days”. I thought it was from a song or hymn, but no-one I ask recognises it. It means something, but I'm not exactly sure what. Pray that God will speak to you today as we spend this time together.

In the western world, it is a fact that most of us are subjected to “noise” from the moment we wake up to the time we go to sleep, and for some it continues during sleep. This noise will come from a variety of sources:- radio or television, the background rumble of daily life, noisy neighbours, traffic and so on.

We might have chosen that noise, or it might be inescapable.

But “noise” doesn't have to be just audible, it might be the visible jumble of images we are constantly subjected to. Television, advertising, social media for example all vying for our attention. Also, the inescapable “noise” in our heads might consist of other distractions:- worries, concerns, anxieties, demands of work or social expectations.

Such things can crowd in on our minds and occupy our every thought. There is no doubt that in general we find it much more difficult to concentrate than we used to.

This condition of the 21st Century has been gradually developing over some considerable time in the Western world. We have come a long way from the quieter pace of life, and natural rhythms of former times.

And now suddenly, we find ourselves in a much altered situation. Without warning, and with no preparation we have been launched into a quieter world, with a different pace, different challenges and difficulties, but also joys and simple delights.

Here is the first section of Psalm 46. I suggest you read it out loud if possible, then silently and slowly.

Psalm 46 v 1-3

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

It has been reported that one in four of the population have tuned into a religious broadcast and/or have started praying. In troubled and anxious times we need a rock. Have you noticed that much of the BBC religious programming is from the Established Church? More than that, they often seem to be from Cathedrals. This may be deliberate, for our great Cathedrals and ancient places of worship have stood through famine, plague and war. They represent something solid in shaky times.

Overheard recently *"I'm not at all religious but people need something..."*

For a believer of course, it is God who is our rock, and our faith which holds us there.

Here is the second section of Psalm 46
Read it slowly as before and as many times as you feel is helpful.

Psalm 46 continued v 4-7

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,*

the holy place where the Most High dwells.

⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall;*

God will help her at break of day.

⁶ *Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;*

he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ *The Lord Almighty is with us;*

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Faithful one StF 628

Video Link <https://youtu.be/7PiSO5IhI0M>

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again.

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Part 2

When we stood outside at 11am on Friday, VE 75 day, you could have heard a pin drop, except that the birds didn't stop, and we were so conscious of their calling and the buzzing of bees.

So many people have remarked that they are noticing the small things. The activities of the birds in the garden, the detail in the wild flowers, discovering paths and woods and fields, and the intimate changes in nature usually missed.

During this strange time our perspectives must surely have been changed. Society will no doubt rush back into the "old" normal. But what about us? Will we as Christians have a new and different normal?

Here are some quotes that might help to appreciate the risk and danger of rush and distraction, not just to our peace of mind, but for our spiritual health and the health of the church.

Take time over these.

CS Lewis *"To walk with Jesus is to walk with a slow unhurried pace. Hurry is the death of prayer and only impedes and spoils our work. It never enhances it".*

Corrie Ten Boom *"If the Devil can't make you sin, he'll make you hurry"*

Anon *"People are just too busy to live emotionally healthy and spiritually rich and vibrant lives"*

Ron Rolheiser *"We, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion".*

John Ortberg *"For many of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith, it is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them"*.

For us as individuals and for us as the church, we have a unique opportunity to re-evaluate who we are and what we do.

The Vision meeting we had at Snape chapel in January this year was unusual. Usually we have lots of ideas, often entailing yet more activity. At this meeting the Spirit led us to one place only. Simply this - that our relationship with God is of prime importance, and that Jesus must be central. That was it. This is our vision. "Jesus is Central."

You will have noticed that God is always way ahead of where we are, and we are always so slow to catch up.
Has He been preparing you and I for this time?
Is He preparing us now for what is to follow?

If we learn the lessons that are presenting themselves through this trauma, we will be changed by what is happening. We must be changed.
We must quiet ourselves, and listen.
Dwell with him in the quiet place.
Take time. In a world of rush there is no peace, no knowing Him as he wishes to be known.

Psalm 46 continued v 8-11

⁸ *Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*
⁹ *He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.*
*He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.*
¹⁰ *He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;*

The "desolation" God brings is to bring peace. He calls us to be still.

Think about these verses for a minute.

Isaiah 30 v 10

*"In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength.*

Psalm 131

² *But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.*
³ *Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore*

What joy there is in coming close to God in quietness and trust. It's a relationship that David likens to a weaned child at peace with it's mother.

Martha and Mary

So what are we to learn from Martha and Mary? It's a familiar story, and we will have heard many sermons and interpretations, but for us today I feel the key word is **chosen**, as in "Mary has "chosen" it.

What did Mary choose? Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet, and the reason she sat at Jesus' feet was to listen.

It's not that Martha was doing anything wrong, after all preparing supper was presumably a good thing, it's just that for that moment, in that place Mary had chosen to listen and Martha (who maybe could have been listening) chose not to. In fact she was getting "worked up over nothing" or "distracted" in some translations

Martha is doing a necessary work but Jesus says "come and sit at my feet".

And he invites us to do the same.

As Christians and as Church there are occasions when we choose:-

Bustle over stillness.
Noise over quietness.
Distraction over focus.

Our lives are full of distractions but to sit at Jesus feet requires us to turn off those distractions and just be with him and to listen to him.

To walk with Jesus requires us to slow down and walk at his pace not ours.

As we prepare to pray, think about what you may have heard on your doorstep earlier.

Please either use this prayer, or pray as you feel led.

A Prayer

Loving heavenly Father.

Forgive us that in the restless rush of days
we have missed your voice, and at times
forgotten your presence.

Forgive us that we have filled our minds and our
lives with so many distractions that we have
unwittingly edged you aside.

Help us Lord God to put you back into the centre
of our lives, and our very existence, both as
individuals and as your church.

Just as Elijah found you in the still small voice,
help us to make time, make space to find that
quiet place to be with you.

In Jesus' precious name
Amen

The Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours.
Amen

To be in your presence StF 530

Video link <https://youtu.be/typ7cueKdT4>

To be in your presence
To sit at your feet,
Where Your love surrounds me,
And makes me complete;
This is my desire, O Lord
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord
This is my desire.

To rest in your presence,
Not rushing away,
To cherish each moment –
Here I will stay.
This is my desire, O Lord.....

Our final words from

Psalm 64 v 10-11

*I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”*
¹¹ *The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Praise God who WILL be exalted among the
nations.
Praise God who WILL be exalted in the Earth.
He is our fortress, our Rock, our Strength
and our Peace
Amen.

And may The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The Love of God, and
The Fellowship of
The Holy Spirit,
be with us all
Evermore.
Amen