

“Seeing and believing”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Revelation 1:9-14

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/6Urt8gy6dIM>

Many of us are feeling wearied by the ongoing situation of lockdown and living in the constant shadow of Covid-19. This is not an easy experience for anyone, and without taking anything away from that, we might recognise from the narratives of our Scriptures, that it can often in the difficult circumstances that people discover and learn. John, the writer of Revelation was placed into lockdown, not to protect his health but as part of a wave of persecution against the Early Church. But amidst that reality he received a revelation of the rule and reign of God that has influenced us ever since. As you reflect on his experience, you might consider:

Where are you creating space to be present to God? John describes his moment as the Lord’s day. What is the equivalent of that for you? What routines do you need to establish and maintain as your own experience of lockdown takes its course? What does it mean to patiently endure? (v9) What frustrations and irritations do you need to choose to let go of, not because those things don’t matter, or are even unjustified, but because you don’t need to be consumed or defined by them? What do you need to release not only for your own wellbeing, but also to truly focus on God?

Remind yourself that God is present

The “one like the son of man” is depicted as walking amongst the lampstands – present with his church, even though his church is disrupted and scattered. The lampstands may have been fixed, but from what is described, the risen Jesus was free to move. God can find you whatever your “here and now” might be. As John’s subsequent writing goes on to clearly demonstrate – there is an awful lot of God to be found. This is a time to shift our focus away from the “lampstand” - the structures and shape of local church – focus on the one who walks between them.

Remember you are part of something so much bigger.

As is so often the case in the Biblical narratives, when John finds himself in trouble, what changes is not his circumstances, but his vision of God. Much of what is happening in our world at the moment might disturbingly resemble those rulers and beasts in the later chapters of revelation, flailing around as they futilely seek to overcome what they ultimately cannot control. We are impacted by that – John’s experience was the very real human cost of the Roman empire seeking to impose its control on every aspect of peoples’ lives. But however current circumstances impact us, we are part of a much bigger story – let that reality inspire you and reassure you and let that vision of the eternal reign and rule of God, put our present realities and struggles in perspective. The more John was drawn into this vision of the risen Jesus – the more his current circumstances just became passing details.

PRAYER

Loving God, even though we find ourselves in a place that we neither wanted nor expected, remind us that you are no less present with us and that nothing can separate us from your love. Help us to develop rhythms and routines that make space for you; to create “holy ground” even if that is somewhere quite different to what we are used to. Open our hearts to your presence in every circumstance and help us to remember, that whatever our present situation might entail, your eternal reign and rule continues in all its glory. Inspire us with the vision of what was and is and is to come, so that we can journey with hope and assurance through whatever surrounds us today. AMEN