

We Will Remember Them

Today my thoughts have been centred on what we are now facing in New Zealand as the country prepares to move from Alert Level 4 down to Level 3, which has marginally fewer restrictions for most of us. What difference will this make to our thought patterns, to our perception of what this world is still grappling with?

We have spent the past 4 weeks strictly in our family bubbles, however small or large they may be. We have had to accept that we can't just have what we want; the supermarket shelves may not have had our favourite choices, maybe even not what have become the essentials of life in today's world. When picking up the phone and ordering takeaways if we decide that cooking dinner is just too much hassle, has been impossible. In our acceptance of this change we have been encouraged to show kindness, to be grateful for all the frontline essential workers who have cared for our health and our wellbeing, doing their best to keep us fed and feeling safe that this plague has been kept at bay. Keeping an eye on those who have needed support, even though we haven't been able to give them the hug that they most wanted, has been brought to the fore. Stories of so many people showing appreciation, consideration and love have filled our social media and evening news broadcasts.

However, I have found it really sad that in the media all I seem to be hearing are comments on how great it will be to have our favourite takeaways or coffee. In the midst of the global pandemic now reaching its tentacles into Africa, Asia and South America, where there aren't the resources to cope with the growing numbers of victims of this plague, all we can think about is fried chicken and cappuccinos.

Thousands of years ago a nation found themselves saved and protected by the blood of a lamb over their doorposts and lintels as the Lord passed over their houses while the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. Then, God parted the sea and they walked across on dry land, only to witness the Egyptian army swamped as the sea water returned.

Despite seeing these amazing, wonderful displays of God's hand keeping them safe, the nation of Israel began complaining almost immediately. They berated Moses for leading them out of Egypt, in today's vernacular they wanted their coffee and takeaways, and they made sure he heard their complaints.

My yearning, my most earnest desire, is that as a generation that are still going through this evil plague, we continue to be kind, to be appreciative, to reach out to the lonely, the hurting, the broken ones. We remember all the many of us who declared the protection of our God over this land as we sang our national anthem and waved our flags, while standing at least 2 metres apart.

Why do we feel this need to be frantically pushing to get back to a "normal" when satisfying our greed is more important than meeting the needs of those around us? My heartfelt prayer is that we do all we can to make a new normal. A normal where loving our neighbour supercedes loving takeaways and

coffee. Where a smile, a wave and, eventually, a hug can lift someone else's spirit and fill us with joy as well.

Today is Anzac Day in New Zealand, 25 April, the anniversary of the Gallipoli landings in World War 1 where so many New Zealand and Australian soldiers died. We remember and reflect on the lives lost, on lives shattered and families left grieving. And we declare that we will remember them. This year there are no public services, none of the usual dawn parades and wreath laying. At dawn today we went to our farm gate and stood in the dark hearing the Last Post echoing around the hills and we sang our National Anthem, "God Defend New Zealand".

In the Anzac Days to come may we always remember, as well as those whose lives were lost or affected by war, those who are currently battling this plague, those who have lost their lives, families who have not been able to be with their loved one as they pass away.

Oh dear God, in Jesus Name I pray, continue to defend New Zealand; throughout the days ahead help us to remember and to make a normal that will reflect what we have learned.

That loving our neighbour as we love ourselves is our reality.

That coffee and fried chicken are not any longer our top priority.