

David Baddiel who is a Jew and an atheist said that obviously God was not in the concentration camps. Yet the surprising thing is that some important writing and foundational books about life come from those terrible places and that hideous time. Viktor Frankl's 'man's search for meaning' for example. Frankl who went through the camps realised that if people were to cope with trauma they needed to maintain a will to live. That came from discerning a purpose even in the most ghastly circumstance. 'who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.' (Nietzsche). Meaning focused coping is the term. But it needs to be substantial. The times that we are in are times when the foundations of many people's lives will begin to show.

Some would take these passages to be all about resurrection about life beyond this life. The dry bones in Ezekiel come back to life and Lazarus leaves the grave. Yet the dry bones do not die and then move on to a happy place they come back to life. And more than that Jesus says to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and I am the life'. 'Life', that is about today. That he is with us not in the future only but also now.

A pal of Jesus is ill. Jesus does not rush to go to help him he waits and then arrives when the man was 4 days dead and smelly in the grave. When Jesus meets up with Lazarus' sisters he weeps with them. Jesus weeps and you wonder why? If he was who he says he was why weep? Why not have a smug smile that says, stand well back kids I've got this and then flies in and sorts it all out. What is all this emotion about? Maybe just in that moment there is a lesson for some that it is OK to weep and be anxious. Maybe that is what you need to take away from this text. Weep its OK. You are not letting the side down if you rage or cry at what is happening to you, your job, your family our world. The events that were cancelled the workers putting themselves on the line and the lives that are at risk. Crying and shaking a fist sounds a reasonable reactions to me. Read the psalms if you feel a bit embarrassed at shouting at God.

Here we are again with one of those long narratives that we have in John. We had Nicodemus coming at night, we had the unnamed woman at the well and here it's the raising of Lazarus. It is not a simple reading and its implications for times like these are more demanding than some might like to think. Look says a voice. Let's keep it simple. Really? All over the place there are people looking for simple solutions in these times. I'm sure you've heard stuff...blame the Indians the Chinese. Get this to happen and that we sort it. Sign this petition. Do this bit of meditation. Put up a candle, say the Lord's Prayer, volunteer or clap.

None of the things are bad of themselves but we need to be clear that they will not take away the pain of standing at the grave of someone we love weeping. Being a follower of Jesus does not prevent the people we love from ending up in the grave in the first place. Life as many thought life is is not. People thought they could escape the pain and real uncertainty that is how life is if they just had enough structure, work, activity, family, friends and possessions. For many people in an affluent country like the UK we come face to face with the shock that life is something else at the points of illness and death. For the rest of our live we sort of bob through. Now we are face to face with this monster and we do not know how it is going to end for us.

The good news of these passages is that suffering does not mean that the situation is unknown to God and that God is absent. It does not mean that an uncaring God is watching us like ants on the run. Our sadness at this time is known to God. Our fear is known. Nor does the reading mean that death is all about failure and rejection. Christians believe Jesus knows how it feels to be bereaved and frightened. Time to pray. God has this but what that looks like we are yet to discover

In John 10 Jesus has been driven out of town when they try to seize him as they do not like what he has to say. John 11 he goes back. He

puts himself in danger. There are times when the right thing to do is to put yourself in danger. All over the world there are people doing exactly that. In the UK a month ago some of them were disparaging called unskilled and people looked down their noses at them. Their immigration status was unsure. Now we know how important milkies and posties and delivery people are to us. People delivering food when we need it.

Lets pray for them and more when this is all over thank them in practical ways

The Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church (URC), the Revd Nigel Uden and Derek Estill, have offered the following prayer as the UK and the rest of the world come to terms with the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.'

Psalm 46:1, NRSV

As so much is re-shaped by Coronavirus Covid 19, let us pray with

people left unwell, beckoned by death or bereaved;  
people providing professional health care and advice, looking after loved ones at home or working to create treatments and cures;  
people shaping the response of nations and neighbourhoods, of commerce and industry, of service and voluntary organisations and of communities of faith;  
people who are anxious or afraid, alone or isolated.

Living, loving God,  
we praise you,  
and through times of peril we lean into you,  
for in Jesus Christ  
you have trodden paths as difficult as ours,  
revealing there a love that nothing defeats,  
a love that bears us through.

Even as we strive to behave responsibly,  
and to care reliably,  
so we feel after you  
that in these uncertain times we might trust you are with us,  
our refuge and strength,  
and our faith, hope and love might be renewed,  
through Jesus Christ, Amen.