

Dear Friends in 2nd Saintfield,

What strange times we live in. We join in your disappointment that John, Melanie, Emma & Ben have been unable to join you in Saintfield. Pat & I are praying for them & you as a congregation that God will bring you joy, peace & real solid hope in the middle of this awful Covid19 crisis.

Psalm 46v1 tells us *“God is our refuge & strength, a very present help in trouble.”* The Psalm goes on to tell us not to fear even if the earth gives way, because God brings help and life. Many of us are facing fear in the middle of this pandemic. We see loved ones going to work on the front line & fear for them & ourselves. Some of us carry chronic illnesses & are at risk, we have a deep fear of catching the virus. Some of us will face the loss of our job & livelihood, others of us are experiencing loneliness & isolation. And for some, this is the first time we have faced the reality that we, or someone close to us, could die.

The same Psalm ends in worship & finishes with a great statement of faith – *“The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our fortress.”* Ponder on that eternal truth & let it sink deep into our souls. Whatever our future, we are not alone, the Lord Jesus will never leave us or forsake us.

When Martin Luther faced the prospect of the Black Death, as it steamrolled its way across Europe, he said this: I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine & take it. I shall avoid places & persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated & thus perchance inflict & pollute others & so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, He will surely find me, & I have done what He has expected of me, & so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy & does not tempt God.

If God should wish to take me, He will surely find me. That’s enough for me, & I hope it is for you. It helps me sleep soundly & rise each morning to do His will, knowing that the Lord who died for me & my sins on the cross will never leave me or forsake me.

And what about each day? Romans 12v12,13 read, *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints & seek to show hospitality.”* Pat & I are using these days to live this way, as we take every opportunity to help family, neighbours & strangers. Many of you taught us a lot about how to do this & I have every confidence that is what you are about right now.

I found it interesting that Queen Elizabeth chose to remind us of the old Vera Lynn song, *“We’ll meet again”*. And we will! Not just when normal life returns. Every one of us trusting in Christ will be together with Him on that great & final Day!!

God bless you all.

Graham Connor.