

Sermon 7th Sunday after Trinity 26 July 2020

Romans 8. 26-39

Revd Kathryn Waite

According to a report this week the things that we wanted most during lockdown were tea, coffee, biscuits and a good book. Over the last three months Brits have spent an additional £24 million pounds on tea and coffee, and according to Bloomsbury, the publisher, book sales are up a fifth on last year. Certainly, in our house we have got through an awful lot of tea with the three of us at home all the time having many cuppas to keep us going through each day. We have all needed things to keep us going. Over the last few weeks here at St Andrew's we have celebrated some of the other things that have sustained us – music, being creative, animals and creation and of course the NHS.

I wonder what has helped to keep you going since March? I think there have been times for all of us when it is hard for us to know what we want – what do we want to do when we have too much time on our hands or when we are run ragged with home schooling, working from home and caring for the family. And sometimes, especially over the last few months it has been hard to know hard to pray

The small coronavirus has caused such a global problem, the numbers of people are so huge and the problems are continuing with infections continuing to rise in some places, whereas in other countries are starting to face the economic realities of life post corona virus – How do we pray? Where do we start? St Paul writing to the Romans tells us that the Holy Spirit guides our prayers – not just giving us words when we don't know what to say, but guiding us when we don't even know what it is that we do want to ask for. In the midst of all our confusion it is the Holy Spirit that intervenes and brings our thoughts more into line with what God would want us to pray. The Holy Spirit is working in us, praying for us with sighs too deep for words... and helping us to pray now. We may not be aware of the Holy Spirit working, but the Spirit works in all who have been baptised.

So, God works in us now, but this is nothing new, God has been working throughout history, from the very beginning says Paul in our first reading. God's plan was that Christ was to be the first born in a new family – a new Adam if you like, a family of which we are a part. For those who he

foreknew he predestined. The word that is translated here as "predestined" doesn't appear very often in the New Testament but in Romans, Paul is using it to describe how gentiles will be included in God's plan for the whole of creation. God intends for us to be conformed to the image of his son – to slowly be transformed and to become little by little more Christ like. God's call is for all people but we can choose whether or not to respond to that call

So, God has been working in the past and through the Holy Spirit continues to work in the present. But the future – for many of us the future is very uncertain – just what might school, university, work, the groups we belong to, church look like in the coming months? Will we even be able to meet? So much has changed over the course of the last four months. And just when we think we have worked out how to do something, things change. We were faced with a whole raft of updated guidelines this week from the church of England, which is why today we are wearing our masks through the service. The future is uncertain but...God continues and will continue to work.

Not that things are or will be easy. Paul experienced a pretty hard time as he travelled around the Mediterranean – he endured hardship, hunger, persecution, he was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked... But he argues that God has been faithful throughout history from creation onwards. Because of God's faithfulness and because through the death and resurrection of his only son our sins can be forgiven – the suffering that we now have to put up with now and in the future can be seen in a completely different way. We know that God always has been with humanity – God is with us in all the messiness and pain of life... and because Christ died for us – we can also look forward to what Paul describes earlier in this chapter of Romans to a time when God's glory will be revealed, even if at times, like those we are experiencing at the present, are difficult.

God is with us – something we are particularly aware of as we meet together and celebrate communion together either here in church or wherever you are now. God is with us and the rest of creation, always has been, is now, and always will be – a demonstration of God's amazing, fierce, compassionate love which nothing in all of creation can separate us from – especially not a pesky virus.