

## Good News / Bad News

A group of us are following in Lent the latest York Course “Daring to See God Now”. Yesterday evening we looked at the first session: “The Good News of God”. The accompanying booklet written by the Bishop of Leeds contrasts good news and bad news.

It often seems that the only news is bad news. And there has been a lot of bad news recently: the terrible atrocities in Christchurch in New Zealand and in Utrecht in Holland; the devastating floods in southeast Africa; not to mention the continuing and bitter uncertainty about Brexit. Where is the good news, we may well ask. We may go even further and ask where God is in all the bad news.

As Christians we affirm that God is present not only in the good things, in the many selfless acts of generosity, kindness and love that may not be widely advertised but are still very real. We believe that God is also present in the pain and suffering, in the heartbreak, anxiety and despair of the world. And we see that so powerfully in the cross, in which Jesus, God’s Son, shared in the pain and suffering of the world.

That is the good news to which we are called to respond and which we are called to share with others: the Good News of God’s love for all.

That is not always easy. We admit that. Our minds may be so full of the images of suffering in our world that we fail to see God’s love at work in the midst of, and despite, that suffering. God through his Son Jesus Christ knows our pain and in a deep sense suffers with us.

The Good News of God’s love, of his kingdom of goodness and of justice, gives us hope. Yet the course also makes the point that what is good news for some may be bad news for others. For those who commit acts of terrorism, violence and cruelty, for those who deny the rights of others, for those who act purely for their own ends – for them the Good News of God’s love and justice is bad news indeed. For it challenges them to the core. And yet, as our Bible reading just now reminds us (Romans 5.6-9) God loves even them.

As part of a book group I attend I am reading Jane Williams’ 2019 Lent book “The Merciful Humility of God”. At the end of each chapter she offers a number of suggested responses. The first is the same each time: “Start each morning of Lent by hearing God say to you: ‘You are my beloved’ “. Now that is Good News indeed.

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