

Reflection questions 5 July

Kristee Boyd spoke on the following text, telling of a stressful and potentially dangerous time experienced by her and her family while leaving Egypt in 2011 at the turbulent time of the fall of President Mubarak's regime, and the tremendous sense of relief, easement and welcome they felt when they had escaped safely and finally arrived home.

Matthew 11: 28-29 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Afterwards, the congregation were given these questions to consider:

- 1. What forms do your personal 'burdens' take?***
- 2. How do you currently deal with these burdens?***
- 3. What do moments of 'peace' and 'ease' look like for you?***
- 4. Is there something you are carrying now that you could hand over to Jesus?***
- 5. What do you think is the easy 'yoke' or light 'burden' that Jesus asks us to carry?***

Here follows Christine Bethune's summary of the responses she received:

Several people found these questions agonizingly hard to answer, but then did so with what I found amazing honesty and humbleness. Some of us (with regret) find it hard or impossible to believe that Jesus can help in our lives or present-day situations. Others find it more natural - or at least easier - to turn to him (or God), although not necessarily automatically. You will therefore read very contrasting responses below...

1. What forms do your personal 'burdens' take?

- ❖ The past: coming to terms with loss and grief; difficult experiences to do with work: past failure, mistakes
- ❖ The present: worry and fear for loved ones: family, those for whom we have responsibility at home and at work; the virus; a pressing need to address unresolved or uncompleted matters in our own lives, our church and our planet; "tears of frustration" in the face of some of these huge issues
- ❖ The future: personal (health, house repairs, finance, illness, incapacity, death); our families and those dependent on us; our fellow human beings and the created world (exploitation; climate change; social and global unrest and uncertainty)
- ❖ trying to find God and Jesus in all these things - a burden in itself

2. How do you currently deal with these burdens?

The responses I received covered a really wide range on the reflective – active spectrum:

- ❖ Taking time to think and reflect
- ❖ Turning outwards and handing anxieties and guilt to God in prayer, asking him for peace of mind
- ❖ Sharing the load with others
- ❖ "I let most issues be put to the back of my mind as I have very little control over them."
- ❖ Taking care of ourselves: health, fitness, sleep patterns
- ❖ Being busy – working harder - 'doing things' - but also realising this is not always the best or only solution
- ❖ Dealing with practical everyday things that we are able to address ("perhaps Covid has encouraged us to do more for ourselves!"); continuing to strive for the betterment of our world
- ❖ Planning our church's future: "I'd love to see the plan of works to St Peter's through to a resolution and to see the church beginning to build towards a vibrant future."

3. What do moments of 'peace' and 'ease' look like for you?

- ❖ No worry, and a sense that all will resolve itself somehow
- ❖ A cuppa in a calm, comfortable space, e.g. in the garden, enjoying quiet, sunshine, birdsong ... and a sense of God's presence
- ❖ A walk by the seashore (when possible!) - the person who loves this accompanied it with this beautiful picture!



- ❖ Being with the whole family – even on Zoom! And on special occasions
- ❖ Learning to enjoy these times and not reject them as time wasted or indolence

4. Is there something you are carrying now that you could hand over to Jesus?

Not everyone felt that Jesus could help in their situation or that he has any control over events. Some of us find it impossible to sense Jesus' presence – in either good or hard times – and expressed regret that this is so.

- ❖ Returning to work; future work decisions
- ❖ Lack of confidence: [should I] keep trying?
- ❖ Guilt and worry about past mistakes; time and opportunities wasted; knowledge that we could have done better
- ❖ Difficulty in trusting that Jesus will be present in the darkest times

5. What do you think is the easy 'yoke' or light 'burden' that Jesus asks us to carry?

Trust was a major theme:

- ❖ Trusting in God and knowing that Jesus will walk with us through the difficult times;
- ❖ The promise that whatever comes in the way of loneliness and illness, it will not be more than we can bear
- ❖ Trusting ourselves and others; belief in humanity despite tribulations

And finally, in all our busy minds and busy lives:

- ❖ "I know I must stop from time to time to savour and enjoy God's goodness to me."