

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Just do it!

Dear Friends,

There was a fashion a short time ago to wear clothing, especially T-shirts, emblazoned with slogans such as "No Fear" and "Just do it". I haven't seen any for a while, but I am sure some people still wear them, perhaps they are still available. As ever with such items, one wonders whether it is a statement of a courageous fact or just something to wear.

"No Fear" and "Just Do It" may have connections with bungee jumping, or it could be several other possibilities. It sounds like a good attitude to have, and generally it is, but there are some situations we rightly fear, and some things we really would be very ill-advised to do. However, there is a great deal of fear around. Few of us could wear that T-shirt with integrity.

I said in the sermon for the Hertford Team Ash Wednesday Eucharist that one of the greatest resources I find in working with people in hospital is the 23rd Psalm. Admittedly, for many years I felt the psalm was over-used and over-familiar, but for my Lenten Confession, I was very wrong about that. It is used because it is so very appropriate for all times in our lives. Mind you, if I had written the versified hymn which is sung to the tune 'Crimond' I would have wanted to improve that first line, and find a more positive and uplifting tune. I want to refer to the original version in the Bible.

The Lord is my shepherd is a wonderful picture and hopefully even in this day and age we have sufficient understanding of a shepherd's role as leader and protector that we can see how God leads us forward

in hope. The next verses speak of being led into righteousness, also of the peace and restfulness of trusting in God who loves us and cares for us. This is a lifetime of developing our faith in God in all circumstances, and how often we should return to the peace which he gives us and to ask to be goaded on into right actions when the world tempts us to turn away.

The real all-embracing love of the Shepherd is revealed in the central verses: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil". What an affirmation. Pain and suffering are very real challenges, and this valley is one which we all have to face at some time, both in our own person but in the losses we are likely to sustain over the years. When we walk through that valley, we will not fear. This can be a more everyday trust too, of course – there are potential dangers in so many places, and the newspapers regularly update us on the latest accidents and atrocities. Life is in some ways tenuous and fragile, and amongst all that we can enjoy and appreciate we know there are those valleys of the shadow. Yet, the psalm tells us, we should not fear, but trust. God is with us, and his presence is referred to as the shepherd's care: "Your rod and your staff comfort me".

Jesus went on trusting as he walked through that valley, as we will hear afresh this Passiontide, Holy Week and Easter. He did not turn away from the way he knew he had to follow, which took him through a painful experience in body and soul. In John's gospel he is described as the "Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep". He endured this to demonstrate the fullness of God's love and to draw us to God through placing our faith in him. It is

Jesus' love and sacrifice that means that we need have no fear of all that is evil, rather we can trust God through him. So may the events of Holy Week lead us to have "No Fear" of the problems and uncertainties of this world, for we can be committed to the way of Eternal Life which Jesus offers. "Just do it!"

Every blessing,
Revd Doug Loveridge