

I've just been really inspired by Psalm 89 as we read it together at prayers this morning. You may have noticed if you were listening! What a great understanding of the Lord's covenant promise Ethan the Ezrahite (author of the psalm) had!

Ethan, sandwiched by knowledge of the Lord's undertaking that his covenant with David would never fail and yet, in his experience, seeing it seemingly fail, what does he do? Falter and fail in his faith and hope? No, he clings to the truth his Lord has promised and takes him at his Word even although he cannot see how the Lord will keep his promise. That's faith! In the light of what we *do know*, trusting God for what we don't know or can't work out yet!

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

Incidentally, this is also a great reminder to read passages of Scripture in their entirety! The lectionary only prescribed verses 1-2 and 20-26, thus missing out on the whole meaning of the psalm as Ethan demonstrates the Lord worthy of trust even when he appears to have deserted his people.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
Psalm 89:1-2

So let's remember that if, under his sovereignty, God has allowed this pandemic, it will not thwart his promised purpose for humanity. Also that as we learn to deal with it, he will bring blessing out of the adversity caused by it.

One of my particular hopes is that when we look back on this, we will see it as the time when the church learned to take the promises of the scriptures and the gift of prayer more seriously again. It's not so much that the church doesn't believe in them, but that all too often we trivialise them and although we *do* them, ***we don't lean our full weight upon them!***

To that end, may I commend to you the smart phone App Lectio365? It's free and unlike some Apps where you are more concerned with working the App than with praying, you can have the 'liturgy', and Bible read to you and press pause for times of personal prayer and meditation. Why not try it and see. If you're not a smart phone or computer user, why not do your version of what we do at the 9.00am and work through consecutive psalms and reading from another, familiar OT or NT book, pausing to reflect and pray as you read?

Any to sum up, two verses to remind us of where to seek strength in such times as these:

"...In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. Isaiah 30:15:

"The Joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10

The *daily* discipline of a quiet time *alone* with the Lord has immeasurable benefit, blessing and strength for us. Let's learn to re-find it in all its fulness in these times. For the Lord's glory and our prevailing, let's prove that, ***"those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint."***