

The things you do in the dark will be brought out into the light and the things which have been whispered will be proclaimed from the rooftops. So do not be afraid.

The readings- from St Paul's Letter to the Romans and from Matthew's Gospel speak to us in the midst of unsettled times, and always. Do not be afraid. Paul calls us back to our bedrock, our foundation, to Christ our cornerstone- we died with Christ on the cross, he reminds us, and now are we raised with him. We are made to be his eternally through the waters of baptism and through bread and wine. We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song. We are Christ's always: and, as Paul will go on to write two chapters later "nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord". Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid. We are still united with Christ through baptism, even though we can't baptise new believers at the moment. Do not be afraid. We are still one with Christ at the Eucharistic feast, even though we cannot gather to obey his command to do this in remembrance. Do not be afraid. Remember our baptism. Remember that we are what we ate and will eat again, one family, one body, one redeemed Easter people. Do not be afraid.

And do not be afraid because everything will be brought into the light and what was whispered in secret will be proclaimed from the rooftops. We read that usually as a fearful promise, as something to be afraid of, scared by. And there will be things brought into the light which we would rather not share, our true motivation, our lazy, prejudiced assumptions, our easy judgements and our casual condemnation, our jealousies, our sin. Brought into the light by the God who loves us, the God of mercy and justice, the God who longs to forgive us so that we might be set free from the prisons we keep building for ourselves and others. That things will be brought into the light is frightening- that God is merciful causes us to rejoice because perfect love drives out fear and does not give up ever. With God by our side, we should not be afraid of the light, even when the things we are ashamed of, the things we constantly try to press down and hide in the corner and forget about, are brought into the open air. Do not be afraid.

And do not be afraid, because these words apply also to our secret goodness, to our moments of courage, to our private generosity, to our genuine and heartfelt forgiveness, to those moments when we are who we long to be, our very best selves, those moments when we allowed and allow the Spirit of Love and Truth to work in us richly. All of this, all of this, will be brought into the light and shouted from the rooftops and God will say to each of us: "This is my child, in whom I am well pleased" and God will be pleased. So do not be afraid.

Every act of service we have done in these last, lonely, frightening weeks will be brought into the light- our phone calls, our notes, our volunteering, our thoughtfulness/ our compassion, our prayers, our going to work even when it meant being away from our

family, the ways we put others first because it was our job and our vocation/ and every time we wanted to see someone and chose not to and the way we have faced this together/ all of this, and so much more, will be brought into the light and shouted with delight from the rooftops.

Every act of courage in the face of evil will be brought into the light. Every time people have stood firm and opposed oppression and injustice and prejudice will be brought into the light, even those, especially those, which have never been spoken or told of, whose truth and courage, it seemed, died with them. Every righteous protest, every act of repentance, every wrong attitude we have overcome, every time we have carefully and deliberately listened, every act of solidarity and selflessness and love, every moment when people listened to the constant voice of Christ in their hearts and knelt and then stood firm, stood for others, stood for justice, stood for healing, stood for community, stood for the voiceless and the silenced and the overlooked- well, do not be afraid, Jesus says to us- all of them, every last one, will be brought into the light. All of them, every last one, will be proclaimed from the rooftops with pride. And the whole people of God will be pleased as God is pleased at the good things we have done with what Mary Oliver calls our one wild and precious life. Do not be afraid.

Those four words are woven through the Gospels and the whole of Scripture like a golden thread- Do not be afraid. As the angels told the shepherds of Bethlehem. As Jesus said to the disciples when he climbed into the boat in the midst of the storm which he wonderfully stilled. As Jesus said as he sent the 12 to bear witness, to heal, to restore. As the angels said from within the empty tomb to the women who came before the dawn burdened with grief, feet heavy, faces streaked with tears. And as he says to us now, Do not be afraid. I am with you always, even to the ending of the age.

Do not be afraid. Go and build, welcome, embrace the kingdom. Go and nurture the kingdom in all of its fragile beauty and all of its deathless promise and all of its immense and glorious possibility and potential. Now is the time.

Now is the time we are given to live in. And the words Jesus says over and over are as true now as they ever have been- Do not be afraid. And the role of the Church and of us, Christ's body, is as clear and important as ever- to live out everything we have heard and received, even in the midst of this pandemic, especially in the midst of this pandemic. Now is our time- and what we do will be brought into the light and proclaimed from the rooftops, not for our own glory but for the glory of the one who we serve and follow, and for the building up of an eternal kingdom in which all can find a home, find rest, and in which all are treated according to their worth in the eyes of the God who made them and loved them enough to die for them and who fills their hearts through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Do not be afraid. This is our time. God is with us always. How we live, how we serve matters very much. What is hidden now will be brought into the light. What is whispered now will be proclaimed from the rooftops. Do not be afraid.

Amen.