

121 Hallelujah, I'm saved!

Does God love the world? Of course! “God **SO** loved the world...”

Did God send Covid19? No, of course not! Not the God I see in Jesus.

So, did the devil send Covid19? No, that's not the point!

Does God want us to learn something from Covid19? Now we're getting somewhere!

Does God want Christians to learn something from Covid19? Well, yes, maybe, but God so loved **the whole world**. So, I think that God wants **the world** to learn that at any and every level of society we must learn to live as a mutually supportive community. If we don't, the planet won't survive. Well, it will, but humankind won't.

If we try to grab the “resources that are ours” and fight off anyone who tries to take them from us – e.g. if we fill our freezers and our larders with food, so that poorer people starve – then we won't be around much longer as a species.

There are enough resources to go around, but only if we – at **every level**: local communities, countries, and a whole world – learn to care and share, to live as a mutually supportive community.

So, are we as Christians failing to lead the way? Well, we probably shouldn't be too hard on ourselves – Christians have been, and are, involved in caring for others. But I wonder if, **spiritually**, we live by the same selfish paradigm that could see the end of the human species? What do I mean?

The Christian model that I was brought up with was that what **really** matters is **personal salvation**, whether I am saved or not. Oh, sure, we're selfless in our evangelism – we go out and try to “tell people the Gospel”, i.e. convince them that we have the truth, the ‘answer’. And then sometimes, because “some people” don't get it right, we have to split off from them and form a different church, and then another different church, and another different church.

Paul, you're being too negative. Surely, maintaining the purity of God's truth is important. “The devil is prowling around, like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Well, yes, to an extent, but I would have thought that Satan has been able to devour more people by our (i.e. Christians') **wrong attitudes** than by our having the wrong theology. If you go around and talk to “people on the street” (not that we can, at the moment), how many will say that they or their parents used to go to church but... [you can fill in the reason(s) here]? And how much of what has put people off was well-meaning Christians who were trying to tell them “what was right”? We really must not underestimate the importance of our attitudes to other people.

Personally, I prefer to err on the side of inclusion, of working together, regardless of my neighbour's exact theology. If it's important for us Christians to model **anything** in these dark days, it's community, inclusion, cooperation, and not spiritually stockpiling “the truth”.

You know, I've often wondered what the heck Jesus meant by his parable of the wheat and the weeds. And having just re-read it (Mt 13:24-30), I've noticed that it follows **immediately** on from Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower (18-23), and I think maybe that's **not** a coincidence.

I vividly remember our Rachel's sermon on the parable of the sower: What a useless farmer, she said. Why didn't he carefully and deliberately put the seed only in the **good** soil? Surely, a decent farmer can easily tell the difference between good soil, a path, a rocky area and a bunch of thorns! But God is a **prodigal** farmer (as well as the prodigal father I keep harping on about) who bungs the seed willy-nilly anywhere and everywhere. God is so **desperate** to reach **everyone** that the seed will be cast everywhere, even if there's only the **slightest** chance of it growing.

And so then comes the parable of the weeds; isn't it saying the same sort of thing? Don't fuss about rooting out anything that looks like a weed, anything that's not quite "right". If you do, you might root out a perfectly good shoot of corn!

I'm not saying that theology's a waste of time (if it were, I'd have been wasting a **lot** of time this past couple of years), but what does almost everyone say about St Ed's, and why do people who don't actually attend the church talk about "our church"? Well, they say "It's such a welcoming church – such lovely people."

Sorry, but I think my attitude to others is far more important than being right.

Bless you all! Stay safe!

Paul Bev. 24.3.20