

Yesterday's morning prayer had the passage from Luke's gospel with the parable of the fig tree (Luke 21:29-end) and I was struck initially by the opening sentence:

'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

With all the time we have had available to us over the last few months, we have had the opportunity to study nature far more closely than usual, and we have seen the changing colours, the new growth and the arrival of summer. If I recall correctly, several of the daily messages during lockdown spoke about this. Only a couple of days ago I picked the first crop of blackberries to make bramble jelly – the smell of which always reminds me of my childhood!

The passage from Luke continues to the real point though – that there are indeed signs that the Kingdom of God is near, that they will be recognisable and that we are to be 'on guard'. Today the phrase we would probably use would be 'stay alert'.

From today, we are to wear a face mask when we go into a shop (or indeed, other enclosed space where we might find ourselves close to people other than our direct family). I know that for many people, this will be difficult physically and for others this will seem an unnecessary infringement of their civil liberties. But 'stay alert' is the message we have been given for some weeks now from our Government and mask wearing is part of this. Much of the work I have been able to be involved in over the last couple of months has been to provide kits for making simple face masks for asylum seekers, so that they are able to go out and about and feel safe (I make no comment on the medical efficacy of masks). The point is that we are urged by Christ to be on our guard and not be weighed down with the troubles of this life, so that we are not caught out unexpectedly, in the same way as we are currently urged to take every step possible to keep ourselves, and others, safe.

The opening part of yesterday's morning prayer is from Psalm 67:

God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us,

I have no doubt that God's face will still be able to shine upon us, masks or no masks!

Christ promises us that even when heaven and earth have passed away, his word will remain. Staying true to that word is our task, prepared for all that this day may bring.

With blessings

Linda