

Dear Friend

As today we remember both William Shakespeare's birth (around this date 1564) and death (23rd April 1616) I thought a quote from him might be appropriate:

The April's in her eyes; it is love's spring,
And these the showers to bring it on. Be cheerful.

Anthony and Cleopatra Act 3 Scene 2

This April has to be among the sunniest I've ever known - very few showers to cause the blossoming of love! I hope the sunshine is helping you to feel some measure of cheerfulness. After yesterday's musings on sleep, I hope you slept well and have been able to rise and shine today!

Appreciation for the beauty of nature and this remarkable spring we are living through lies at the heart of our faith, as we see the glory of God in everything that exists. If we are able to give thanks to the Lord and praise him for the wonder and beauty that we see all around us, this can help keep us cheerful. I'm sure you remember the old song 'Count your blessings'; in this song we are encouraged to 'name them one by one'. It does our souls and spirits a power of good to hold our gaze on all the positive things in our lives. This is not just optimism which is blind to the reality of pain and suffering, but a hope based on the goodness of God. The magnitude of what the world is experiencing now is too much for us to carry. What I believe the Lord is wanting from us as his people during these days, is that we should never forget his goodness, faithfulness, and the truth of his promises, keeping our eyes on the One who died and rose again, while at the same time lifting before his throne in our prayers all those who are in the darkest of places, especially the shadow of death. For us who believe that the power of love and light has utterly defeated death and the darkness of the grave, hopefully, although we are living with uncertainty, we are not living in fear. For those who have no such belief or knowledge, the shadows are dark and fearful indeed.

God's word tells us that our loving Father's will is for everyone to come to know the truth and be saved (1 Timothy 2.4). The context for these words is Paul's exhortation to Timothy, and also to us, to offer petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for everyone (v. 1). So we are far from helpless in this situation. Whether we can go out and do practical things to help others, or whether we are confined to our homes, we are all able to respond to this call to heartfelt and persistent prayer - that God's will be done, which is that no one is lost eternally to our God who loves us all and desires above all that we humans who share something of the image of the creator, will know the height, depth, length and breadth of this love that surpasses knowledge and so be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3.18-19).

So whether or not during this last week of April, we experience April showers, may we have the brightness of April in our eyes and the spring of God's love in our hearts, welling up to eternal life.

Verse for today: A call to be cheerful!

Though the fig-tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the sheepfold
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Saviour.



Habakkuk 3.17



A seasonal joke:

When do monkeys fall from the sky? During Ape-ril showers!

With much love and prayer

Simon