



Rev Dave Brown
Rector of St Nicholas Stevenage & St Mary Graveley
2a North Road, Stevenage. Herts. SG1 4AT
Tel: 01438 213587
Email: revdmbrown@gmail.com



Dear all,

Briefing 6: Tuesday 31st March, 2020.

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

I was listening to a podcast the other day from theweeflea - a Christian minister who was working in Dundee but is now in Australia. He takes a look at the news from a Christian perspective and is always thought-provoking. In this podcast he mentioned the amount of panic people are feeling today. Fear for their families. Fear for their livelihoods. Fear for their health. Fear about the future of the world as we knew it. At first glance, it looks as if Christians have something else to fear... The devil prowling around like a roaring lion looking for believers to devour.

But Peter’s aim in writing this letter isn’t to get believers panicking, but to help them to stand firm. Very often the Christians who get devoured are those who are self-confident, rather than Christ-confident. And so in the 2verses before this sober reminder that we have a real and powerful enemy, Peter writes this: *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* There is our antidote for fear and panic. We are to be humble and cast all our anxiety on God, and know that he cares for us. What an amazing thought that is.

There is something more for us to do, because verse 9 tells us that we need to resist the devil by *‘standing firm in the faith.’* The verse explains that Jesus never promised health and happiness in this life. In fact, he told us that in this world we will have trouble, but that he would give us his peace. That peace comes when we cast all our anxiety onto God, knowing his love and care, and also when we *‘stand firm in our faith.’* That means placing our eyes on Jesus again and again and again. Placing our eyes on Jesus when things are going well, so we don’t get complacent. Placing our eyes on Jesus when we’re panicked, so that we may know his peace. Placing our eyes on Jesus when we are under threat, sick, lonely, dying, knowing with deep certainty that everything works for the good of those who trust God, and that even if our lives should come to an end, what God has prepared for us will far outweigh any earthly joys.

So let’s keep our eyes focused on God and the immense treasure that is ours in Christ. Let’s pray those big prayers, that we might grasp this knowledge more and more. Then our minds will be alert and sober. Then we will know more of God’s peace. And then we will be able to stand firm, no matter what comes.

SUNDAY SERVICES...

Can I say a huge thank you to everyone who has given feedback on the Sunday services. It’s wonderfully encouraging to hear these online services have been a blessing. Do keep your comments coming, and do write them in the comment section under the videos on our YouTube page. That’s also a good place to add any questions as well, so that the conversation we would usually have had over tea and coffee can continue, in some form at least.

This coming Sunday I hope that the songs will be embedded within the video so there will be no need to click from one YouTube window to another. We will also have different people leading our prayers and reading the Bible. If you’re asked to do this- please watch this short video before you record. It’s aimed at those giving talks, but the advice is helpful for those reading or leading the prayers too. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyLeB6VtFVE>

Obviously, putting this together will take a little longer – and it may be that you have the kind of skills in simple video editing that you would love to be able to put to good use. If that’s you, if you have the skills to put together a single

YouTube video from various clips, please do get in touch with me in the next day or so. Most weeks it will just be the Sunday service, but since we are approaching Easter, there will be one or two other services which need these skills. And it would take some of the weight off my shoulders if someone else with the skills would volunteer.

EASTER EVENTS: 3 extra events next week:

Thursday 7pm: Maundy Thursday service will be released to YouTube, bringing our Lent course to an end.

Good Friday morning: there's no parade and town centre service this year – but CTiS are putting together a Good Friday service including a short talk from me. I'll let you know the link when I have it.

Good Friday 3pm: An hour of reflective music meditations on the cross will be released on YouTube.

HELP! I DON'T HAVE INTERNET ACCESS!

We are aware that a number of people who receive these updates can't access the Internet, and so aren't able to access any of the talks. That is about to change! From this Friday, we will be releasing 3 programs each week that can be accessed via the telephone. Simply dial this **local number 01438 907143** and listen in. It will, *hopefully*, include Evening Prayer on Wednesdays and Fridays as well as the Sunday sermon.

If you know of anyone not on the Internet, you might find this service useful, please pass this telephone number onto them.

SOMETHING FOR YOUR SOUL...

The song for the day is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsA_UPXnlw It's He Will Hold Me Fast.

The talk for the day is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHPaFDRZMUo> It's a classic Billy Graham sermon that's sure to warm your heart.

BITE-SIZED BIBLE

A New Bite-Sized Bible has been released on our YOU TUBE channel on the book of Jude. Take a look here. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzRGAaIRTsJuKFRBvkLjAtQ/> Don't forget to share, like and subscribe.

A REMINDER...

PREVIOUS LETTERS AND INFORMATION: These can all be accessed via our websites or Facebook pages.

KEEPING IN TOUCH: Please do take up the **4UP/4DOWN** challenge and call people regularly.

PRAYER: Why not try downloading the **PRAYER MATE APP** to your mobile device or tablet. A private group prayer network has been set up- and whether you are from St Nicholas or St Mary's, search for the St Nicholas Church Stevenage group, sign up and wait to be approved... You'll then be able to share prayer requests across the church family.

NEED HELP? If you or a neighbour need help that you can't provide, contact Herts Help on 0300 123 4044 or via <https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx>.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER? See <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS> or <https://www.thvolunteering.org.uk/>

There will be another update later in the week, in the meantime, may God bless you and your families and may the LORD hear our prayers on behalf of our nation and our world.

Yours in Christ,

Dave