

St. Mary's Sermons

Date of Sermon: 13th April 2020

2 Chronicles 7

New Living Translation (NLT)

For many years 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14 has been a verse that God has often spoken to me through. I'm sure that many of you will also be familiar with this amazing promise. "If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land." Without doubt this is a verse that speaks directly into the situation that we currently find ourselves in.

But I have to admit that until last week when Pete Greig the founder of the 24-7 prayer movement referred to it in his book "Dirty Glory", I had never ever noticed the preceding verse 13 before: "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague....".

It struck me that two of the most important words in this verse are also two of the smallest words which could result in us missing the significance of them altogether.

The first word is **when**, not if, things go wrong. While we may no longer experience plagues of locust devouring the land, the modern-day equivalent would be a banking collapse or a recession. God does not promise to eliminate crisis from the lives of his people. In fact, crises are opportunities for us to shine as beacons of light and faith.

Secondly, God says that when such troubles come, he will hear us **if**, not when, we turn to him for help. Sadly, it is not inevitable, nor automatic that we will respond to the problems of life with humility and prayer. Sadly, history shows, only too clearly, that human instinct in the face of any crisis is independence not intercession. We are self-help addicts and God tends to be our last resort.

At this crucial time in our history the government is doing all it can by providing temporary Nightingale hospitals, extra equipment and staff to run them, and by supporting businesses that are not able to operate. The public, by and large, are doing their bit by staying at home. While these things are important, as Christians, we must also do what we can and continue to PRAY, not as a last resort, but as a top priority that God will have mercy upon us, deliver us from this evil virus and heal our land.

Psalm 20

In times of trouble, may the LORD answer your cry.
May the name of the God of Jacob keep you safe from all harm.
May he send you help from his sanctuary
and strengthen you from Jerusalem.
May he remember all your gifts
and look favourably on your burnt offerings.

May he grant your heart's desires
and make all your plans succeed.
May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory
and raise a victory banner in the name of our God.
May the LORD answer all your prayers.

Some nations boast of their chariots and horses,
but we boast in the name of the LORD our God.
Those nations will fall down and collapse,
but we will rise up and stand firm.

Suggested songs for the 12 noon prayer times

Tuesday: Happy Day (Tim Hughes)

Wednesday: Jesus Christ is risen today

Thursday: Man of sorrows

Friday: The reckless love of God

Saturday: Great is thy faithfulness

Monday: Blessed be your name