

For the Display of His Splendour: Thrive

3rd May 2020

Good morning thanks for joining us.

Intro

The Christian writer CS Lewis wrote in his book "God in the dock" about how our expectations shape everything in our lives. *Imagine a group of people living in a building, half of the people think they're staying in a smart hotel, and find the conditions terrible. The other half think they're staying in a prison and think conditions are great. It's all about expectations.* If we think the Christian life is pain free and easy we will find things intolerable, if we see it as a place of training, growth and correction, we will be pleasantly surprised

So I don't know what your expectations are of being a christian?

For you it may be all about getting your ticket to heaven

It may be simply an interest and appreciation of the divine

Church may help you from feeling too bad, about things you've done

It may be about trying to learn about a good way to live, about morals

Or is it about Abundant life with God, adventure, a good life, being fully Alive

I've been a Christian for over 40 years and during that time, I've seen lots of friends commit their lives to God, only later in life to walk away. It's completely heart breaking and I know many families in St Swithin's still ache over this massively. So what happened? Were their expectations of the Christian life not met? Did God not meet their needs? Did they really not want to follow what God wants? Was it too tough?

A Christian writer I know wrote a book looking at why so many Christians and Christian leaders crash and burn. He compared the Christian life to a car race, many of us start off the race, thinking the road ahead is straight, the terrain is slightly downhill and the view is uninterrupted, only to find that there are tight corners, tough hill climbs, hairpin bends, different road conditions, bad traffic and we spin out of control, unable to navigate the road ahead. We Crash

So how do we build a christian life and a church, that thrives in all conditions, that is ready and prepared for what's ahead of us? There are Lots of amazing Bible passages this morning that talk about thriving, peace and life.....

Creation

Christians believe that each one of us is unique, and made in the image of God. All of us were made to flourish and thrive in partnership with God and make our unique contribution to this world. The plan was peace, fruitfulness, harmony and mutual flourishing/thriving

Fall

But things went wrong when we decided we didn't really need God, that we could do things our own way. Suddenly there was breakdown and separation in the world, we got lost. Selfishness and greed infected our world, we constantly self destructed, we grew bad habits and addictions dogged our lives. All was not well, as violence, oppression, disease and disaster marred our experience in this good but now fallen world

Jesus

This brokenness made God sad. So in his great love, compassion and mercy God sent his own son Jesus to heal the divide, to restore peace, coming into the world living a perfect life, announcing God's kingdom and dying a sacrificial death, overcoming the power of sin, death and hell so that we could know the fullness of life Jesus came to bring. Forgiven our sins, free from guilt, shame and oppression, our new life with God opened up ahead of us, from the finished work of Christ.

Spirit

At Pentecost God pours his Spirit of love out upon us, so a new life of love, joy, peace, patience and kindness opens up for us, God begins a process of transformation/change in making us like Him – our creator. God is with us and has made his home within us and there is no part of our lives that he doesn't want to bring to life as we discover new life in Him

We need God's touch

Back in the 13th century there was a German emperor named Frederick the Second who wanted to know what language children would speak if no one ever spoke to them. He chose several newborns and he instructed the nurses to feed them but to provide them no cuddling or talking. What language do you think the children grew up speaking? They didn't grow up at all. All the babies died before they could talk. We human beings thrive when we are touched. We need to be touched. And most of all we need God our Creator's touch. God's presence in our lives

Here's what we read in Rom 5.5, "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Life with God

Like Christians before us, we discover a life with God of good plans, not dead ends, where we're called to take steps of faith and obedience with hope, where we get to join in serving God's amazing redemptive plans in mission. We discover the joy of God's personal presence and find the strength to make a difference in the world as he breathes his peace over us. In connecting, committing, serving, worshipping, praying, studying **we learn how to thrive.**

Life with God is an adventure, God loves to get to work in every area of our lives, at school, home, work, in our clubs and leisure, God cares for the whole of our lives and it won't always be easy. In the OT people blessed each other with peace the shalom of God, blessing people to be whole, to be well, to flourish, to thrive and to be at peace, In the NT God pours his Spirit out upon us, and continues to bring us to life today. As one west country Christian writer put it with God's life in us we were born to burn

I think the people of Bath expect to thrive, but with God's strength, can we?

Let's Pray