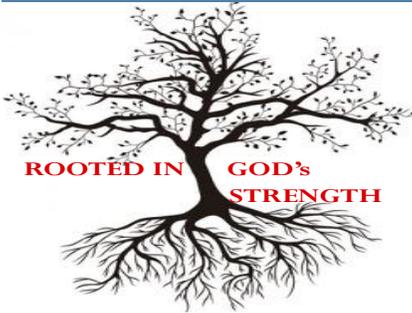


STAYING CONNECTED

SUN 21ST MARCH '21

WEEK 53



A belated Happy St Patrick's Day to you all. Wednesday 17th March 2021 was a day like no other before as despite COVID & lockdown restrictions, many nations celebrated St Patrick's Day with the Irish. Tourism Ireland's Global Greening Initiative ensured that a record 690 iconic landmarks in 66 countries across the world were bedecked in celebratory green!



People on safari in Kenya were amazed to see the Masai Mara in green. Polar travellers saw the most northerly 'greening' in the world, a post box in Norway, 250 miles above the Arctic Circle. Christ the Redeemer's statue in Rio, joined Italy's Leaning Tower of Pisa, Canada's Niagara Falls, the London Eye, etc all 'greened'. Over 70 million people across the world claim Irish ancestry & so associate & celebrate with St Patrick.

"St. Patrick's Breastplate," is a powerful prayer attributed to him which begins,

"I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, through belief in the Threeness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation." As Christians we are rooted in God's strength.

Daily in all of the situations and challenges that we find ourselves living in & through, we do so only by God's mighty strength. Val comments on page 2 in VAL SAYS, "God does supply my every need, most importantly the 'God given strength' to keep going". Today we have all risen & keep going only through God's mighty strength & yet so often we get up in a fog of forgetfulness & ingratitude, where we try to claw our way out of the miry depths of unbelief into leading lives full of light, hope & this strength.

Different mornings provide alternative options for discouragement. We may feel that it's going to be a bad day that we don't want to get up & face it, or we feel we have failed, or are abandoned, or any one of many other negative self-images that Satan accuses us of being. But St Patrick's prayer focusing on strength and Christ's resurrection power continues:

*I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.*

We arise in strength today by fixing our eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). This is not about us, but rather about what He has accomplished for us. We don't arise today by our strength but by *His*. He breaks the chains of accusation, shame, failures & faults all piled high & all ready to send us into a prison of self-loathing. And as we rise Jesus whispers the truth to us, that we are not perfect but good, we are not failures but are blessed. Like Patrick we can say that:

*I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,*

*God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me*

From snares of devils, the temptation of vices, from everyone who shall wish me ill, afar and near.

We hide ourselves in Christ & in Him we find our strength. He does not accuse us, He blesses us. He invites us to be changed into His likeness, and not to gaze at our weaknesses or fears but to look at Him, our Saviour & Redeemer, our conquering hero. And as St Patrick's breastplate goes on:

*Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.*

Psalm 46 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble"* Daily we need Christ's strength within us to sustain us, we need His forgiveness, His mercy, His love & His Light, and we need the Holy Spirit's gentle breath and quiet whisper guiding us. When we truly look to & focus on Christ, we will have the strength for whatever lies ahead of us. Like St Patrick and later in Psalm 46:10 we are invited to:

"Be still and know that I am GOD.

Be still and know that I AM.

Be still and KNOW.

Be STILL.

BE."

VAL SAYS



When I was asked by Hazlett to contribute this week I said, “yes”, then thought, “what can I say...”. Some of you I’ve known for thirty-five years, others of you I don’t know well. How this year has changed things, not least in our ongoing relationships with others in the church family!

I’ve been so many things over the past thirty-five years, both inside and outside of Tanterton Christian Fellowship. As a scientist for MAFF(Defra) and a daughter, sister, aunt, granddaughter, friend, Take Six member, Worship Leader, Sunday

School Superintendent, Time Travellers helper & subsequently their leader. Then a virus swept round the world & life as we knew it stopped.

Roles change as we move through life and I understand that’s to be expected, but over the past year I have had time to look inside myself and consider what God wants from me NOW.

My role as daughter has changed. My mother had been my carer for 20+ years but now I care for her as her health deteriorates, and that has been a privilege especially over the past year. As my Mum says, “we muddle along together”. She very rarely goes out these days and doesn’t understand the precautions needed when outside the home.

There have been some significant health issues for family and friends, but God DOES supply my every need, most importantly the “God given strength” to keep going. Yes, some days the CFS/ME gets the better of me but for the most part I’ve stayed healthy and have received my first vaccination in February. I thank God for the abilities of scientists throughout the world to produce vaccines so quickly.

My role as Time Travellers (TT) leader has changed too. I have kept in contact with all the families delivering crafts and gifts at various points throughout the year. Now I am putting together some devotional readings & gifts leading up to Easter. The

children I see and speak to are desperate to get back to see their friends in TT again. How & when that might happen is as yet unknown.

Over the past few days I’ve had the opportunity to speak to Rachel Grace, who lost her son recently with an asthma attack, & also to another young man who came through TT & “isn’t doing much these days”. Many of these young people we have for a season & whilst I may worry about what the future holds for them following the pandemic, I have given them over to God’s loving care.

HAZ SAYS

Let us all remember to pray for Val & her mum Eileen, and all those other friends & family that Val helps. Pray too for wisdom in her role as she leads TT.

Sunday 2 p.m. COMMUNION ZOOM



*Zechariah 10:1 “Ask the LORD for rain in the **SPRINGTIME**; it is the LORD who sends the thunderstorms. He gives showers of rain to all people, and plants of the field to everyone”.*

It’s SPRINGTIME !!!