

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

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Subject : God's unchanging love for us all. Will you claim it?

Dear Friends,

I recently saw a big sign outside a church which read "2,000 years old and still under the Maker's Guarantee!" You certainly couldn't buy anything today with that kind of guarantee even with extended warranty!

But what is the Christian faith a guarantee of? It's a promise that God's love for you will never change no matter how old or young you are or how many centuries pass by. God's love for those who inhabit this planet in three hundred years time will be just the same and just as great as God's love for you and me today. I said in a recent service "God will never love you any more nor will He love you any less than He does right now." Neither will the Truth of the Christian message change. Certainly people choose to worship God in different ways and even understand God in different ways but what must unite all Christians is that Jesus died on the Cross and rose again to take away our guilt, to grant us forgiveness and to set us free and put us right with God. The promise of God's unchanging love and the offer of complete forgiveness will never change and is open to everyone including you.

But the question never changes either and the question is "Will you take up God's offer of unconditional love and forgiveness for you?"

I read in the newspaper recently that someone had won the Lottery and were 3 million pounds richer but didn't know it. The person, whoever they were, had not claimed their prize and it was quite possible that the winning ticket had been thrown away or destroyed. They were literally sitting on a fortune and were totally unaware of it. I don't know if that person ever came forward but if they didn't then I hope for their sake that they always remain blissfully unaware of their mistake. Just imagine having let all that wealth slip through your fingers. The love and forgiveness that God is offering you is a richer prize by far and there are so many people who are choosing to ignore or dismiss His offer. God has a prize waiting for you and one that no amount of money could ever purchase because the prize was bought by Jesus 2,000 years ago with His own blood shed on the Cross. You are a millionaire in spiritual terms and, unlike the lottery winner, you can't claim ignorance because I'm telling you about it now. Don't screw up your chance of salvation, forgiveness and peace of heart, mind and soul.

You might feel inclined to say "Well, God's guarantee isn't worth very much because He doesn't prevent unfair human suffering and just look at the mess that religion has caused in the world!" Both of these accusations are correct and there is no doubt that untold suffering and cruelty have been caused in the name of religion. But whose fault is that? God's or our's? And it's certainly true that God doesn't prevent unjust suffering. He set the standard for this when He allowed His own Son to die on the Cross and millions of innocent people have shared in that pain since. But He didn't leave it there for Jesus was raised from the dead and so injustice and unfairness do not claim the final victory. But, yes, it's still true that God doesn't stop innocent suffering. And yet, even within this world of injustice and unfairness, He still gives us cause for gratitude. Try making two lists of all the things that have gone wrong in your life and the things that have gone right and please try to be honest.

Many of us are miserable because we choose to be miserable and no one is responsible for your happiness except yourself. The fact that you're alive, the love that you've known and shared, the sun that beams down on you, the person who asked how you were and meant it, the flowers in your garden (even counting weeds) or the flower on your windowsill and so many other things. And, above all, the fact that God's love and forgiveness of you is guaranteed for all time.

There are many of us who have watched our children suffer but does that mean that we love them any less? So why don't we give God the same credit as we give ourselves? Even if the Lottery

winner one day discovers the mistake he/she made then they still haven't missed out on the ultimate prize of salvation. But it does need to be acknowledged and claimed.

So, whatever you're doing this summer don't waste time wishing you were doing something else and wherever you happen to be don't spend time wishing you were elsewhere. Make the most of where you are, what you're doing and who you're with and add them to your list of things, people and places to be thankful for so that when the winter comes you can be kept warm through your gratitude. And whether summer, winter, autumn or spring don't forget that God does love YOU and that's guaranteed for a lifetime and beyond no matter what!

With every blessing for a lovely Summer.

Peter

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