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Forget-me-not

Bible reading: Hebrews 6:10-12, 19-20

For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. And we want each one of you to show the same diligence, so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Reflection

The coronavirus is the biggest threat this country has faced for decades. [...] The way ahead is hard, and [...] many lives will sadly be lost. [...] I know that as they have in the past so many times, the people of this country will rise to [this] challenge and we will come through it stronger than ever. We will beat the coronavirus and we will beat it together.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, 23 March 2020

Do you remember where you were when the Prime Minister addressed the nation from Downing Street? Do you remember your response and the responses of those around you?

Do you remember?

Jane Mossendew, in her inspiring and challenging Lent book *Thorns, Fire and Lily*, takes the reader on a six-week walk through her garden, reflecting each day on a different plant. Today's plant – by some extraordinary coincidence (although do we really believe in those...?) – is the humble forget-me-not.

I love forget-me-nots and they're an absolute must-have in my garden. A joy in their own right, with their bright blue flowers and glowing yellow centres, planted alongside spring bulbs such as daffodils and tulips they produce a riot of colour which announces that spring really is here.

At the moment, my flower beds are dotted with small clumps that are gradually filling out, full of hope and expectation. Even now I'll periodically dig up and divide clumps to ensure that they're liberally spread around the garden to maximise their impact.

Forget-me-not.

For many of us, our remembering today will be suffused with pain: physical, emotional, spiritual.

Many of us have experienced the last twelve months as a wave of pain and disappointment, fear and anxiety, change experienced on a vast scale and at break-neck speed.

Many of us will have experienced COVID-19 infection first-hand. Some will have fully recovered but some will be suffering from 'long COVID' with all the challenges that brings.

Many of us will have lost loved ones, either from COVID-19 or from an illness or infection that may have been more successfully treated if the NHS and social care services had not been under so much strain as a result of the pandemic.

Many of us will be living with the pain of loneliness and isolation, grieving the loss of time with family, friends, church and community.

Many of us will be mourning the loss of employment and livelihoods, even of homes.

Today we hold before God all those whose remembering is suffused with pain.

And yet...

Many of us have learnt the value of stillness and quiet, of simple pleasures and things that in the past we've taken for granted.

Many of us have rediscovered – or discovered for the first time – the joy of gardens and fields, of walking, running and cycle rides, of wildflowers and wildlife.

Many of us have reclaimed the time we used to spend commuting and taken up new – or rediscovered old – hobbies and interests, read mountains of books or even started new businesses and charities.

Many of us have met with God in new ways as the familiar surroundings of our rural churches have been closed to us, gathered with the people of God from far afield through the wonders of modern technology, or through time spent outdoors in solitude.

Today we celebrate with those for whom the last year has been one of liberation and new possibilities.

Our short reading from Hebrews 6 reminds us that whatever our experience of the last year, God has been, and continues to be, present with us. We can be assured – reassured – that our hope acts as a 'sure and steadfast anchor to the soul'.

We know, however, that this isn't over yet, that there is more to come, that there will be more remembering. In her reflection, Mossendew recalls an old legend:

'As God was walking through the cool of the evening after the Creation, he noticed a small blue flower and asked if it knew its name. The plant, overcome with shyness, whispered that it was afraid it had forgotten. And God answered, "It is Forget-me-not. And I will *not* forget you."

Prayer

(From National Day of Reflection, [churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/national-day-reflection](https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/national-day-reflection))

Dear God,

Be with us as we think about all that has changed this year,

And help us to trust that you are always with us.

Be close to us as we remember those who have died,

And help us to trust they are at peace with you.

Show us how to reach out to others with kindness and care,

So that hope shines out in every heart and home,

Amen.

Response

For yourself...

Try to take a little time over the next 24 hours to reflect on the last year in whatever way works best for you. You might like to write a reflection, draw a picture, go on a walk that's become important to you over the last year, look back through photos you've taken...

If you have access to a garden centre (these are open in some parts of the UK but not others) why not try and find some forget-me-nots to plant in your garden? They're extremely easy to grow from seed but are biennial so need sowing this summer to flower next spring.

Be aware of the thoughts and feelings – particularly the unexpected ones – that creep up on you today or in the coming week. Be gentle with yourself and try to take time out as and when you need it.

For others...

Who in your church or community might be feeling forgotten or overlooked? Who is grieving the loss of a loved one? How might you bless them this week?

- Give them a ring or send a text
- Put a card through their door or in the post
- Adhering to local restrictions and maintaining social distancing...
- Pick some spring flowers from your garden or buy some £1 bunches of daffodils from your local supermarket and deliver them
- Bake a cake or hot cross buns and deliver them.

As you keep an eye on your own emotional responses at this time, be aware of the responses of others you encounter; be quick to give people the benefit of the doubt, extending grace and patience where necessary.

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