

Dear Friends,

I pray this finds you well and managing your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health during these days like none other. It is still odd, after a year's time, on these beautiful spring days not many people are out and about enjoying the timeless beauty of God's creation. The joy and laughter of spring is still muted.

Though a number of us have got their first job, some of us both, happiness is still missing from the life of people. So what is it that is causing this? A psychology professor who has done extensive study on happiness has said that one of the greatest barriers to happiness was not what many would think. It was not about wealth or health or any of the other external or material forces. One of the biggest barriers to happiness is uncertainty.

Well, I guess this is true. We are living in a time inundated with unhappiness and discontent. In some quarters of the population this is more intense and expressed via protests, occasionally resulting in unsavoury incidents.

Uncertainty is pretty much a word that describes just about everything including churches. Within the church communities, this is not just about when we will begin normal worship and other activities we love doing but real concerns relating to how many are going to come back, financial situation, personnel to fill in key roles etc.etc. The 'not knowing' eats at our happiness. The saying that people who receive bad news are happier than those who receive ambiguous news, describes quite well the current situation. When we get bad news, we are sad for a while, and then get on with life making the most of it. We tweak our life style and attitudes. But we cannot come to terms with circumstances whose terms we do not know yet. An uncertain future leaves us stranded in an unhappy, frustrated and powerless present with nothing we can do but wait. And we wait, and we wait. When we will be able to socialise freely with our loved ones and friends and fellow believers? Hug and kiss our grandchildren? These are some of the questions bothering us and no one in a position to give any reasonable answers.

Having said all that, we do have some certainty that can help us to break out of this spiral of unhappiness. We are children of God and followers of Jesus and

we cannot separate our current reality from that truth. Faith does not change the circumstances, it changes us. We look at the world with hope and with knowledge that is deeper than the bottom line. There is an ultimate, foundational truth that we stand on – we are children of God. We are never alone. We are called to love God and each other. We are to help make this world into a place where all are fed, sheltered and safe. Covid-19 has threatened us and will continue to do so, even after everyone is jabbed up. But we are created for eternity and ultimately it cannot defeat us. It is okay to be anxious and concerned, but let us not forget whose we are. Happiness depends on what happens but joy is a condition of the soul. Let us nurture the joy. Let us live our lives in such a way that others experience joy because of our faith and actions.

As we continue on this journey of difficult circumstances, we are now beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel. However, the unknown - what that light will reveal, is still a cause of concern in many minds. Let us not worry about that and keep travelling on, hand in hand with each other and our Saviour besides us.

Have a blessed week,

Asif Das