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It's Mental Health Awareness Week!

I will keep it brief and just use this space as a reminder that this week is [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), a campaign from the Mental Health Foundation. They've a great [two minute video on their website](#), which I'd encourage you to share. It echoes many of the messages that we have talked about in previous Together Apart emails, and offers some simple actions to connect you with nature as a daily mindfulness exercise.

As we hurtle towards, what I'm sure many of us hope to be, the end of lockdown, I know that bluebell walks and evenings in the garden with our fire pit will remain high priorities this month as a way of managing the state of my mental health. I hope that you have all found those simple pleasures that ground and re-energise you, and continue to use these as some regular pamper time!

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Doorposts and Thresholds

Bible readings

Deuteronomy 11:18-21

'You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Mark 16:19-20

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

Reflection

45 years ago, my parents moved house to a suburban semi and I helped them with the unpacking. There was the usual sorting out of which furniture went where, of finding things which weren't in the boxes we thought and generally making the new house feel like a home. On the wooden surround to the front door and similarly on the surrounds of several internal doors were objects I hadn't seen before, small metal rectangular boxes each fixed there with a couple of screws, left there by the previous owners.

I didn't know what they were but my Dad did, as he had previously been good friends with neighbours who were Jews. He unscrewed one of the rectangular boxes. 'It is called a Mezuzah', he said, 'and contains a scroll written in Hebrew with two texts from Deuteronomy. It is fixed to doorposts because that is what the Deuteronomy text tells you to do'. He unrolled and showed me the text on the scroll which was inside.

The second half of the text of the scroll inside the Mezuzah includes the words which we have for this week's reflection, Deuteronomy 11:18-21. Doorposts and thresholds have a special importance in Jewish life. Blood of the sacrificial lamb smeared on doorposts saved the Jews from death at the Passover. Likewise, much of Jewish history was of a pilgrim people, who crossed many thresholds.

Today, standing at the threshold of our homes when going from outside to inside or vice versa is a great time to be reminded of God's presence, of the need to recognise that presence on the other side of the door and for me to be united with God.

Rural life especially can bring with it a sensory richness on the front door threshold. Whether it is feeling the bite of the cold or the warmth of the sun, whether the wind is carrying the aroma of silage or manure or warm wet soil, whether the rain, snow, or horse flies and midges strike us first, will vary day to day. The new sensory awareness must deepen our focus and never distract us from God. The imperative to be reminded of God in every place is as much needed in Christian circles as it was with our Jewish antecedents.

Our Gospel, too, shows another threshold. Jesus ascends to Heaven, being drawn up into the clouds. Just as the difference between the home and the outside world is only a thin door, so close is Heaven to earth.

As the pandemic eases, we will be renewing our threshold-crossing. We will once more be both going out to other's homes and more congregating in churches, those buildings where Heaven touches earth in a special way. We ask as we do that God be deeply in our hearts and be shared with joy in the presence of those whose touch we have lacked for so long.

Prayer

O God who calls us to cross thresholds knowing that you are where we come from and you are our destination, be with us as we venture again from isolation to incarnate community. Grant an end to the pandemic that we may comfort the lonely the sick and bereaved. Grant that we may again worship you together in joy and song. Enable our communities of families, of work colleagues, of churches to gel together with a new zest for friendship sharing and love. Keep us ever thankful for your presence among us. Amen.

Response

Think about what gifts you might take to those you have not seen for some time.

Ask God's blessing for the deepening of a spirit of concord of understanding and of service.

In what ways might we celebrate as restrictions ease?

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