

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 52

Vaccines are on the way!

We're told that by December coronavirus vaccines will be available. Tests have shown the vaccines achieve high rates of success. The news saw stock markets rise, smiles returning to the faces of news casters, government ministers glowing with relief, newspaper headlines speaking of hope. Scientists refer to 'an incredible achievement' and tell us life will be back to normal by the summer of 2021.

We were told to have hope in all sorts of projects this year – 'moonshot' testing, 'world beating' tracing and tracking, the 'app', social distancing and face masks and lockdowns. But the infection continues to spread – in the UK and throughout the world. The gap between excessive promises and stubborn reality may also raise worries about how the vaccines will be administered to eight billion people.

But vaccines are on the way! A light at the end of the tunnel.

Another stubborn reality we'd do well to keep in mind is that however effective the vaccines may be and however effective their administration the vaccines won't prevent one person in the world from dying. They may delay death for some but that's the most they can achieve. The most vaccines can do is help 'life return to normal'. Is that enough? Is that enough for a world overwhelmed by pain and strife and poverty and injustice? Is that enough when I remember that I must die – vaccine or no vaccine?

Whatever hope I may have in a vaccine, whatever a vaccine may achieve, I need more, much more. For 'life to return to normal' isn't enough. I need more than a vaccine can offer.

What I need to hear is this:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3.16-17)

That is the good news I need! That is *realistic!* It's realistic about life and death, guilt and sin, hope and heaven. The great glory of the gospel of God's grace and mercy is that it's *realistic!* It doesn't promise more than it can deliver. It doesn't pretend I'm better than I am. It doesn't demand from me more than I am able to achieve. It responds to the truth that I must die. What the gospel of God's love and grace offer me will not disappoint. And this good news reaches out to each one of the world's eight billion people!

*There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.*

*For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of our mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.*

(F. W. Faber)

I cannot comprehend grace and mercy on such a limitless scale. What I can comprehend is that the gospel meets *my* need! And will meet *your* need too!

When I open the Gospels, I breathe the fragrance exhaled by the life of Jesus, and I know which way to run. It is not to the highest place but to the lowest place that I hasten. With all confidence I repeat the prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me, the sinner'. I imitate the action of Mary Magdalene, her amazing audacity, which delighted the heart of Jesus, has cast its spell upon my heart also. If I had on my conscience every imaginable crime, I should lose nothing of my confidence, but would throw myself, my heart broken with sorrow, into the arms of my Saviour.

(Therese of Lisieux)