

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 40

We may find during the next few months it will be difficult to hold steadily to the joy of the Lord and the peace of God. Of course we don't know what the next months will bring – indeed we don't know what tomorrow may bring. But it is possible that we'll experience a long and challenging winter.

If so we may ask ourselves: What help does the Bible offer us so we may hold in our minds and hearts the joy of the Lord and the peace of God?

Three truths come to mind: i. be anxious for nothing; ii. look to Jesus; iii. remember the faithfulness of God our loving Heavenly Father. These three truths flow together.

We are called to follow Jesus; we are able to do that only as we look to him. Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, is the greatest encouragement we could have. To look to him, follow him and listen to him as we walk with him. We're to listen to his repeated words that we are not be anxious, not worry, not allow the cares of life to overwhelm us. That's why Jesus tells us (in fact commands us!) '*consider the lilies of the field; to look at the birds of the air*'. He doesn't mean that we're only to see how pretty they are or how plentiful they are. What he intends is that in their beauty and proliferation we should see the **faithfulness** of our loving Heavenly Father who has promised: '*For as long as Earth lasts, planting and harvest, cold and heat, Summer and winter, day and night will never stop.*' (Genesis 8.22) From the day the Lord spoke those words to Noah his promise has stood firm! For that reason Jesus says we're not to be overwhelmed by worries about any of these things but to trust the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father.

Which brings us to encouragement the Apostle Paul gives:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Doing this you God's peace, which is far beyond our understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4.6-7)

This has nothing to do with the (supposed) 'power of positive thinking'. It has everything to do with the faithfulness of God's promise and the loving care of the Good Shepherd for his sheep – weak and vulnerable as we are: '*He will care for his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs in his arms, holding them close as he carries them, and gently lead those who have young*'. Isaiah 40.11 How much does he care for you? '*I am the good shepherd ... I lay down my life for the sheep*'. (John 10.14-15)

Some years ago I wrote a hymn which I'd like to include here:

Be anxious for nothing, the Saviour who knows
Much better than we do the strength of our foes,
Would have us at all times remember his word –
Be anxious for nothing but trust in the Lord.

Be anxious for nothing, rely on his grace;
There's kindness and care in the smile of his face;
His grace is sufficient, depend on his word –
Be anxious for nothing but trust in the Lord.

Be anxious for nothing, when trials give no rest,
He knows where he leads you and his way is best;
He'll walk close beside you, so follow his word –
Be anxious for nothing but trust in the Lord.

Be anxious for nothing in pain and distress,
His promise of glory is ample redress;
Our weakness persuades us to lean on his word –
Be anxious for nothing but trust in the Lord.

Be anxious for nothing, for though lost to sight
His care will not fail us by day or by night;
Our hope will increase when we rest in his word –
Be anxious for nothing but trust in the Lord.

O help me, my Saviour! – in tension and stress
My doubts to reject and your peace to possess;
Your grace given daily, your mercy assured,
Shall fill me with praise and the joy of the Lord.