



**Sunday 19 September 2021**

## **WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE IN LOCKDOWN?**

**A reflection by Jill Kayser**

### **Psalm 27: Take courage, my heart! by Rev Silvia Purdie**

*Silvia writes: 'Psalms in Conversation' are my offering to invite people into prayer, reflection and worship in fresh ways. Psalms are conversations between us and God, and God and us - words spoken by people to God and by God to people over 3 millennia in every culture and language. My version of the psalms aims to contemporise these timeless conversations for people of all ages and stages.*

My God is my light  
My God is my saviour  
Why be afraid?  
My God is my safety  
My God is my home  
I won't be afraid!

Some days are bad days - that's OK.  
Some people say nasty things - that's OK,  
because I am hidden with Jesus  
in the safest place,  
in the arms of God,  
like sleeping in a tent,  
like standing high on a tall rock  
where nothing can get me.

Sure, I might get teased,  
I might get hurt,  
but I don't need to be scared.  
People may call me names  
or try to bully me,  
but I will stand tall!

With God's care around me  
I will sing and dance  
and shout for joy!  
With God's face shining on me  
I will be patient though bad days.  
I will be strong.  
Take courage, my heart,  
lean on God.

**Let's pause and reflect:** Where have you seen God's Spirit moving in your life and the life of the world this week?

## Let's pray:

Lord, our love for you is great! Today we come to worship to remember the Love you show us, a love that we are called to be a part of. We come to worship to remember that we are not the centre of this story. Christ is the centre. But we are called to participate in God's mission of love. Therefore, as we reflect and take stock of our part, what we have done and not done over the last week, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

*Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not put us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever, Amen.*

## Scripture to reflect on: John 15:1-17 (NIV) The Vine and the Branches

*<sup>15</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes<sup>[a]</sup> so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*<sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

*<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: **Love each other.***

## WHAT DOES LOVE IN LOCKDOWN LOOK LIKE?

The image of the vine is a helpful one for us as we consider what God's love looks like during lockdown.

It reminds us that: 1) JESUS IS THE VINE: 'Abide in me as I abide in you' When we spend time with Jesus, we experience and understand God's love for us. This love strengthens us and assures us when we are in times of uncertainty.

## What new or surprising experiences have you had this week where you have been reminded of God's love?

2) WE ARE THE BRANCHES: It is Jesus' love which connects us with each other: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.' We are all connected and all created

and called to love one another. When we experience a kind or loving act from someone, this is one of the special ways we experience the love of God.

**Think of a time someone has been kind or loving to you this week – relish the memory! And give thanks to God for that moment.**

3) THE FRUIT OF THE VINE IS TO BE SHARED: God's love is abundant! As we receive it, so we are called to share it. *'I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.'* We are called, not to keep God's love for ourselves, but to share it with others.

**Is there someone in and beyond your bubble that you could share God's love with this week?** – with a phone call, a text, an old-fashioned letter, an act of service, praying, learning and giving towards a cause or crisis situation in the community or world.... Love in lockdown can take many forms!

**What does LOVE IN LOCKDOWN look like for you?**

Do you remember a song from long ago from Sesame Street: "Who Are The People In Your Neighbourhood?"

One of the gifts of "lockdown", is the gift of time (except for essential workers unfortunately....) Time to reflect on how you can love your neighbour despite the restrictions. It could be a chat over the fence (with masks on of course!), dropping off homemade food at a neighbour's gate, a phone call to check on friends living alone, an offer to shop for those most vulnerable.

Relationship, community and connection is a God given need/desire within. The spirits of everyone are lifted as we care for each other during this challenging time and it's an opportunity for us to get to know one another better.



Bill Duncan is expressing his love by buying cans and packaged food each week towards a food tower that will be built in our church and community centre post lockdown. He encourages all of us to contribute to this "Food for Hunger" project. The food will be donated to our local food bank and the Salvation Army at Christmas time.

Our Small Miracles children have been building a lockdown (or is it a rocktown?) village of stones bearing messages of love to all outside our church and the Glendowie centre.

*(Thanks to Rev Mo Morgan of St James Presbyterian Church in Whanganui who's online worship service a couple of weeks ago inspired and informed my reflection this week.)*

## **Prayers for ourselves and others. Please add your own....**

Dear God, we come to you in our separate bubbles, but connected by Your love.

We come to you from the safety of our homes, mindful that there are many in this world who do not share a safe country or warm home.

We come to you with anxious hearts for what is happening in Afghanistan, for the people trying to flee, for those who must remain and for all those who are trying to help. Please show us the ways we can help too.

We come with anxious hearts for Haiti. With so many lives lost, our hearts cry out for those people who have lost loved ones and those who have lost homes and livelihoods. Please give us hearts to respond.

We come to you, worried about loved ones overseas in countries where Covid statistics are still growing and health care systems are still stretched. Please let us not be isolated and unresponsive to the needs of the wider world.

We pray for our own country and for our leaders who have to make tough and unpopular decisions to protect us and we pray for those frustrated by the lockdown and tempted to break the rules. We come to you with our concern for those struggling to work from home, to provide schooling from home, to care for loved ones from home or just finding it hard to fill the hours alone at home. Please open our hearts and our eyes, and help us to contemplate where small acts of kindness could make such a difference to those around us.

We come to you in awe and gratitude for the beauty we see around us. For the daffodils and blossom reminding us that spring is on its way reminding us that all things have their season, and this too will pass.

We come to you in all things. In fear, anxiety, loneliness, desperation, gratitude, thankfulness, joy and love grateful that we know your spirit is with us now and always.

**Amen**

