

## 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Matthew 25:14-30

This is the day that the Lord has made.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!!

We often quote this at the beginning of a service of worship; it reminds us of why we are gathered together, to worship and thank God for his goodness.

What happens after the service though?  
Do we take the same attitude home with us or do we leave it in church.

How do we relate to what Paul says in verses 1-2 of 1 Thessalonians 5:

I really don't need to write to you about how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

Another question:

How are you coping with Lockdown 2?  
Better or worse than you did in Lockdown 1?

The thing about Lockdown 1 was that the hope of an end in sight kept us going. Surely this would be all over by Christmas. We have got through flu epidemics before.

But in this second phase did we feel a bit more depressed? Were we beginning to think it would never end – lots of people have said to me I just can't see an end to it.

Then suddenly, on Monday, the news that there had been a breakthrough with a possible vaccine. Hurrah!! Again, light at the end of the tunnel.....maybe.

A group of us were discussing, by Zoom on Monday evening, what we had done to lift our spirits during this time of isolation. I think the people who have seemed to handle it, or are handling it, best are the ones who have been, and are, keeping busy.

We all have our own ways of keeping busy don't we?

I admit I do have my own way – but I wouldn't advise anyone to buy a puppy without giving it a lot of thought. This is my advice for the day ☐

Getting on with life because this *is* the day that the Lord has made, so let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We cannot and are not supposed to second guess what the future holds; because we never know what tomorrow will

bring, a life can be changed in a moment, as many is have experienced.

Verse 3 of 1 Thessalonians 5:

When people are saying, “All is well; everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as birth pains begin when a child is about to be born.

This, of course, does not mean we have to go around expecting disaster to fall, but it means always being open to the unexpected of what God will do next. I have a friend who has the wonderful gift of accepting everything life throws at her by saying, “well I didn’t expect that God, what does that mean?”

Instead of complaining and moaning that her plans have gone wrong she looks for what is coming next and begins to prepare for a change in plan.

Seeking out the light, for ourselves and for others, in a time of darkness

As Christians, we are used to the phrase “children of light” because as followers of Jesus we know how his light shone after the darkness of the cross.

I suppose the disciples looked back at their despair after the crucifixion and thought how foolish they had been. It is easy

to look back at our actions and reactions with regret when the future has shown them to be unnecessary. Hindsight is always illuminating.

How many times have we heard, or said, “If only I had known.”

But that’s the point isn’t it?

We don’t know. We cannot see what tomorrow will bring – it may be good news, it may be bad news but in order to be prepared for tomorrow it’s important to remember that *this* is the day that the Lord has made, so let us rejoice and be glad in it; don’t let’s waste it.

Maybe the vaccine will be ready by Christmas – maybe it won’t.

Maybe we will have applicants for the post of vicar next time we advertise – maybe we won’t.

But the gift of life is here to enjoy now pwhether these things happen or not.

We have found things to enjoy during Lockdown. Creative gifts have been released in some (sadly, not in me) but I guess they have to be there in the first place in order to be released!

People have painted, gardened, walked, read books, crafted things and appreciated the time to relax.

Some people have fretted and felt depressed.

If we trust in God to be with us, no matter what, then we are experiencing what it means to live in his light. Hope for tomorrow.

It has been a long time to be restricted and as time goes on and things don't seem to be improving then we can begin to feel tired, we can begin to find it difficult to stay positive. As Paul says in Hebrews, let us run with determination the race that lies before us.

This is when friends show their true worth, with the encouragement of friends we can push on through the drudgery and find something to smile at.

Laughter is the best medicine there is and lifts the spirits. So, as Paul says, "encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."

He reminds us to put on the armour of God, faith, hope and love wearing also the helmet of the confidence of salvation.

We have seen how God has used us within our church family during this time. it has been a joy to see and hear different people taking responsibility for reading the Scripture, saying the intercessions, choosing the worship, leading the service in church and putting the whole thing together so very well

on video, organising a messenger chat and prayer line, and other things.

When we read the parable of the farmer entrusting his workers with gold coins we can be encouraged to see how God has entrusted his church here at Oakworth and Newsholme with the talents he has provided.

We have Bryony, of course, doing all the behind the scenes stuff of preparing rotas and readings and marking out special days plus leading and preaching online services, amongst other things, and we are grateful for her and that and it would have been so much more difficult without her but we must be encouraged to see how we have continued to be a witness during this time of pandemic and vacancy and this must be a plus point to anyone thinking of applying for the position of vicar in Oakworth and Newsholme.

We have definitely not buried our coins in the ground with the excuse that we didn't want to fail.

So, however long the pandemic continues, however long the vacancy continues, we can say with confidence, "*This* is the day that he Lord has made, we *will* rejoice and be glad in it; and in each other."

And we prepare to meet, by Zoom, after this service for our APCM with optimism and a sense of being one in Jesus.

And a debt of gratitude to Roy and all those who have worked hard to make it happen.

AMEN