

I will give you the treasures of darkness [Isaiah 45: 3]

Making the most of lockdown

Lockdown with the coronavirus means we may have time to be still. The suggested way of prayer that follows is what is used in the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer. It need only take 10 minutes – or it could take an hour. It's up to you. You could use this way of prayer once each day with your usual pattern of prayer, or at some other time.

Getting ready

So let's find a bible and somewhere to sit – I suggest a position where we are upright and relaxed, our feet on the floor and our hands in our lap, open to receive. Then over a couple of breaths, as we breathe out slowly, we sense the relaxation flow through our body. Jesus wants us to be here. He says "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you". We are with Jesus.

Listening to God's word and working with God's work

Our word for this week is **I will give you the treasures of darkness**. These are words spoken by God to Cyrus, king of Persia, whom he is prospering as the means of improving Israel's fortunes. And what is the darkness? Is it simply "hidden places" as the rest of the verse seems to imply? Or as we look at this chapter in Isaiah, and see how God reverses all accepted realities in order to raise up his enfeebled people, does darkness also mean something deeper? The following verses show how God is Lord of light, darkness, peace and evil. We often pray to God as one who conveniently meets our needs. However, these verses begin to suggest how there are depths to God which are utterly terrifying and deadly to us. It is rather like looking at the sea in the present summer weather. The sea represents space, peace, the infinity which dwarfs our problems. But for a fisherman working for his living when a sudden storm blows up in winter, the sea is chaos, death, an enemy. Those who truly love the sea must learn to come to terms with its beauty and its hostility. So with God, if we are to truly love him, we have to come to terms with the misfortune as well as the pleasant gifts he gives us.

I will give you the treasures of darkness. As we live with the uncertainties and the fear of Covid19, we are living in a kind of darkness. Yet God is saying that the darkness brings its own treasures. Jacob, chosen by God, had to fight for his life as God wrestled with him at the brook Jabok. God wants us to fight, and in fighting grow in our respect and love and knowledge of God. Darkness is not off limits to God. As the psalmist says "darkness and light to you are both alike". In meeting God we have to find our horizons expanded. Frustration and misfortune can sometimes only be understood in this light. God uses all things to achieve his purpose, good and evil, light and darkness. The treasure in this is knowledge of God - Jesus said "Eternal life is this, to know you the only true God", and he demonstrated this by laying down and taking up his life in obedience to God. Where have I found treasures in the darkness? Where have I found myself fighting with God? How has God expanded my horizons?

For the next few minutes let's reflect on this Word and understand it for ourselves...

I will give you the treasures of darkness

Now for a further few minutes, let's be aware of God, simply hearing the words **I will give you the treasures of darkness**, not thinking about this Word but just receiving it.

I will give you the treasures of darkness Let's pray for those who are on our hearts, and for those infected with Covid-19; those facing imposition of quarantine regulations; those suffering mentally from prolonged isolation and lockdown; Government and NHS personnel; those working on a vaccine; leaders in business and industry and those facing the loss of their job. Schools planning a return to full schooling... people returning to work... the people of Hong Kong under China's new security legislation. To each and all these God says **I will give you the treasures of darkness**

When we have finished our prayer for others, let us thank God for his Word speaking and working in us and in our world, and then finish by saying slowly the Lord's Prayer.

Actually this is not the finish – recall this Word at times throughout the day and join God's work.

Further references: Isaiah 45: 1-7; Isaiah 44-45; Psalm 139: 11-12; John 17: 3; Genesis 32: 22-32