

I am with you to deliver you [Jeremiah 15: 20]

Making the most of lockdown

In the uncertain times following strict lockdown we need to be still and keep our bearings. The suggested way of prayer that follows is what we use 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 am with you to deliver you**. The contemplative way of prayer we have shared over the last 23 weeks allows us to listen to God and hear not just our good intentions, but God's word transforming and directing us. It usually takes time for the impact of God's word to sink in. That is the reason why, in the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer we tend to stick with one Word for a month rather than a week. Lockdown meant a change in practice to a weekly rhythm because circumstances were extraordinary and we were largely confined to our homes. Now we are returning to a more 'normal' monthly rhythm, a sustainable pace rather than an urgent sprint.

I am with you to deliver you. The context of this Word is that Jeremiah felt that God had called him but then deserted him. In response, God promised that if Jeremiah returned to him, then God would be with Jeremiah to deliver and save him.

I am with you to deliver you. As we take our first tentative steps back to normal life and normal worship, we are in a way returning to God. The God we knew, the church practice we knew, the normal life we knew, had all disappeared with Lockdown. Now we are returning to a Normal that is not normal, perhaps newly appreciative of friends and fellowship. Perhaps we even find that in our old Normal we had been drifting away from God, and that the whole process of coping with Covid19 is proving to be a way we are brought to return to God.

I am with you to deliver you. These words of God are not simply words of comfort. Indeed they can be a reminder that sometimes we may have let ourselves regard God simply as a source of comfort. Rather, to believe in God is to identify with his transforming action in our world. **I am with you to deliver you.** These are words strengthening us for service, strengthening us when we find opposition to our faith. For following God means having a mind-set opposite to the world's mind-set, that challenges acquisitiveness and self-assertion with the equally strong and deeply radical command of Jesus to 'love one another as I have loved you' at all levels of our life. **I am with you to deliver you.**

For the next few minutes let us each reflect what that means for us personally and understand it for ourselves. **I am with you to deliver you.**

Now for a further few minutes, let's be aware of God, simply receiving the word **I am with you to deliver you.** Having reflected about this Word, now the most important thing is to pray it.

I am with you to deliver you Let's pray for those who are on our hearts, and for those infected with Covid19; 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. Those who have received GCSE and A level results; schools planning a return to full schooling, universities. For each and all of these God says **I am with you to deliver you**

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: Jeremiah 15:15-21; John 15: 12