

WEEKLY SERMON

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Mind matters ...

We live in a world that is constantly bombarding us with information, and it's easy to get overwhelmed with the sheer volume of it even if it's good and helpful, and not just applicable for the time it was issued.

I wonder if any of you remember that it was World Mental Health Day just over two months ago, or did it pass you by as yet another one of those days assigned to some issue whether relevant to me or not? Maybe you were one of the thousands of people who put up supportive posts on Facebook or via another route and acknowledged the importance of raising awareness of such an important issue? Mental health is something we all need to care about as it affects all of us.

According to The Mental Health Foundation if you're in good health you can make the most of your potential; cope with life as well as playing a full part in your family, workplace, community and among friends.

Some people call mental health 'emotional health' or 'well-being' and it's just as important as good physical health.

Mental health is everyone's business. We all have times when we feel down or stressed or frightened. Most of the time those feelings pass. But sometimes they develop into a more serious problem and that could happen to any one of us.

We need to look after our own and the mental health of others around us.

But how do we do that well? According to a Unicef poster entitled 'Dignity in Mental Health Your Mental Health Matters' which I saw recently we need to 'Get five doses of mental wellbeing daily'.

These are:

- Be active
- Take notice
- Give
- Keep learning
- Connect

I was particularly interested in the 'Connect' recommendation, as not only does it suggest visiting people and sharing, or having a 'buddy' to support, it also suggested getting involved in religious activities and keep connected to God.

As Christians we might say we already know that. But I wonder if at times when we feel overwhelmed, maybe in the run up to Christmas, with all the expectations financially and emotionally; whether the idea of praying comes to mind, and if it does how might that work.

Recently I was telling someone that when I feel overwhelmed, which often seems to happen in the small hours, I pray the first few verses of Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures,

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he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake..

This Psalm reminds me of God's goodness and care, and that he wants us to rest and not to worry, as worry affects our wellbeing.

If this doesn't work for you, don't worry, there are loads of verses in the Bible that can help us to focus on God who is over all things.

We all need to look after our mental health and not just on one day of the year.

So why not try some of the suggestions, and ... 'May God's peace be with us, lifting our anxieties, lightening our step, restoring our vision, filling our hearts with hope'. (John Birch)

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