

Standing at the Crossroads

We are at a Crossroads. This is the first time in history, old testament, new testament, that our world has come to a stop with a global pandemic.

We have been brought to a standstill. What does it mean to stop look and listen for God's direction? As the lockdown eases, as the traffic lights turn to amber, what is God saying?

I think he's saying three things:

WAKE UP – REPENT – COME HOME

1. Wake up

It's as if for a number of generations, the airwaves have been jammed over our nation. People's hearing and seeing has been dulled. But today, I think the data is that people are hearing today more than ever before. Selfishness has become socially unacceptable. Community spirit is alive and well: clapping our NHS workers; Captain Tom is our hero. A Sabbath for the environment. A great awakening of poetry and song. The poem The Great Realisation goes viral on YouTube. People are asking about the big questions in life, waking up to what really matters. People are facing death without the source of life, and they are afraid. The claims of the Gospel are making more sense than ever before.

Second word: **REPENT**

This is not a word that translates well in today's culture. It conjures up the man with placard on the street: "Repent – the end is nigh" so how about

TURN AROUND – DO A U TURN

I think God is inviting us to STOP and make a U-Turn – he wants to break the power of sin in our lives

He's asking US a as church to repent because "judgement begins with the household of God" (1 Pet 4)

Repent of what?

Well, Ask him and I am sure he will show you. But it's funny how through history this word 'repent' keeps going out of fashion. And yet it was the very word Jesus used as the gateway to His kingdom.

Today we might want to say – Make a U Turn, Turn Around! I am asking the Spirit to give us His translation for today, so people can encounter the power of Jesus who rescues us from the corners we paint ourselves into, even the darkest corners of hell.

Martin Luther said this: "Whatever you trust and rely upon – that is properly your God".

What are our idols today? What do we trust and rely upon? Here's the number one suspect...

Money. Jesus is very blunt. Two years ago, Archbishop Justin, wrote his first book; "Reimagining Britain: foundations for hope". He put his finger on the only alternative god that Jesus names – the god of Mammon. "You cannot serve God and Money".

Because Mammon is wonderfully deceptive. He is brilliant at squeezing out the poor. Leaving children on our estates without food. Health warnings are all over Scripture & Christian history. A priority in the early church was – remember the poor.

When Jesus sent out his disciples:– he told them travel light. What if in our shaking as a church, we lose so much excess baggage, that weighs us down from being nimble on our feet with the gospel running shoes of Jesus?

3. **Come Home**

Matthew 9:

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³

As I pray, lots of huddled sheep, scattered across our nation, with no shepherds. Terrified.

This word compassion, really means – gut twisting agony. It’s the same word we get in Luke 15 – the Parable of the Prodigal Son.... When the father saw the son – his heart was filled with compassion and ran.

There is an incredible agony in the heart of God for his lost sons and daughters who he’s longing to come back home. And this agony: so intense it’s been forcing its way into our culture.

It’s in our films. In both the last Star Wars films, Han Solo pleads with his estranged son, Kylo Ren... “We miss you please come home”.

God has put this longing for home in the hearts of his children... and in this crisis, they are starting to tune in and hear... Have you spotted the UK Blessing song on You Tube - 1million views in 24 hours. We are waking up to His peace from heaven – the peace that passes understanding.

I am praying that God does this impossible – that in this crisis, He gives birth to sons and daughters, born of the Spirit, children of the promise, born in impossibility; and that we as a church are there to catch them when they’re born and feed them into maturity

What is the Spirit of Jesus saying to our nation...? With all the agony in the Father heart of God.... With tears running down His face.... Running towards His lost sons and daughters....He is sobbing from the heart “I miss you, please COME HOME”. We are at the Crossroads now.

Bishop Jill Duff
Bishop of Lancaster