

WEEKLY SERMON

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Jesus relates to our suffering; offers unconditional love

In my role within the Board of Education, I spend a lot of time in and around schools.

It is clear from my conversations with Headteachers and governors that children's mental health is a significant issue for schools and seeking ways to support children who are struggling with mental health is a pressing issue.

In many ways it is unsurprising, as schools are only a snapshot of society, and we see increasingly that mental health is being pushed further and further up the agenda of many organisations.

The list of those who are raising awareness is ever growing with the royal family, sports stars and government launching into the debate.

It is interesting that whilst so many different parties are currently seeking to speak into this discussion, there is a text that has been speaking into this debate for thousands of years.

The lectionary readings for this week include one such passage, taken from the sermon on the mount. It is a text that is used a lot to help people understand that we shouldn't worry.

The birds of the air and flowers of the fields are cared for and, therefore, we should realise how much more God cares for us. I often think that the focus seems to be worry, and why we shouldn't worry, but think that there is a greater truth within the text.

Jesus closes this section by saying., "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these [our worldly needs] things will be given to you as well".

It is in seeking God, through reading the bible, spending time in quiet prayer and seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus that we begin to understand the grace of God. Not one of us is worthy, but we are all loved by God.

Not one of us deserves it, but nonetheless God wants to draw us close to him and fulfil our lives. Taking time to recognise this helps us to find an inner peace and resilience that means even when we feel down, worthless or lost, we know that we are loved unconditionally and have an ever-present help in him.

This knowledge doesn't protect us from feeling these things, or shelter us from worry, but reminds us that Jesus, who suffered in our world, can relate to our suffering and offers unconditional love to those who turn to him.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Therefore, the church must speak into the conversation on mental health. Not shying away from the difficult emotions and complexities of the mind, but simply loving others and sharing Jesus' words of comfort and amazing grace.

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