

Pastoral Letter February 2021: Rev Sue Cooper writes

Dear Friends,

I hope you are keeping your Spirits up as the long dark nights of winter begin to recede slightly. The first signs of spring lift us, and show us that new life is beginning again all around us, and this brings us new hope and fresh energy. And this year we really need it, as news of the new variant of Covid knocked us all sideways, but we must pick ourselves up and keep going. We are a very resilient lot; digging in and finding strength when the odds are stacked against us.

On Wednesday 17th February, we enter the season of Lent, which is a 'penitential' season in Church. And Lent gets a bad press by people who don't really understand it.

Essentially Lent is about putting things right; firstly between ourselves and God, and then between ourselves and others. Being penitent means that we are sorry for our sins; and these are the things we say, do, or think, that put a barrier between ourselves and God, and others. Putting things right between ourselves and God is relatively easy, because Jesus came to earth to make this possible for us. This is what we celebrate at Easter, that Jesus died on a cross to save and redeem us from our sins. Part of being penitent involves us recognising and acknowledging what Jesus did for us, and asking his forgiveness, and offering him our committed service; but also in Lent Christians review their lives to recognise where we might be falling short in our efforts to love God and love our neighbour, and we seek forgiveness and renewal of heart.

Getting right with God is very easy because of His great love and mercy towards us. And the Parable of the Prodigal Son is a good example of how God treats us as a loving Father (see Luke ch15:11-32)

It's much harder to put things right between ourselves and others because mostly we don't like to admit that we may have been wrong, and pride gets in the way. But if there's something that we have all learnt this past year it is that life is precious, and that life is short. We have also learnt that many things lose their appeal when you cannot share them with family, friends and neighbours. Life really is too short to hold grudges.

Saying sorry is hard, and many songs reflect this, but it is the way to freedom and peace. If you need to put things right between yourself and God this Lent, don't hesitate. God loves you and is waiting with open arms to receive you. If you need to put things right between yourself and someone else, don't hesitate; life really is too short and you will be relieved that you have done it. God bless you all.

With love Rev Sue

*Luke 15: 20-24*

*'So he got up and went to his Father. But while he was still a long way off, his Father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'*