

An Invitation

Two words are at the forefront of my mind today – division and invitation – and in this letter I will attempt to show how we might bring them together in a positive and healing way.

Today there is division everywhere I look and I suppose there still will be when you read this letter. There is division over Brexit and I am not talking about a simple two-way split between those who wish to leave Europe and those who wish to stay in Europe. The numerous approaches to the issue and supposed solutions to the problems are mind-blowingly complicated and numbingly confusing. Enough said. Political parties cannot agree anything at all between them and the levels of factionalism within those same parties is simply mind boggling.

The divisions between the so called haves and have-nots seem more severe today than they ever have been in my memory. Ethnicity, creed, colour, sexual identity, and what part of the UK you happen to belong to all seem to be creating extraordinary levels of division, suspicion and even hatred.

The media and social media can, in some cases, be justifiably accused of whipping all of these divisions, suspicions and loathings into some sort of out-of-control frenzy.

Which way should we turn? Who should we turn to?

For a long time now I have thought that Christianity at the core of its message offers an invitation – and invitation to come and accept the gifts that God offers us, the gifts that God longs for us to receive. You see, I think that fear, anxiety and insecurity lie at the root of many of the things I have mentioned here that threaten to divide us. John writes in his first letter that: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...” 1 John 4:18a. The Apostle Paul in the context of the church writes that: “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Colossians 3:11. So, according to John and Paul we can say that firstly the love of God is the solution to irrational fear and secondly, that in God’s view nothing exists that should divide us. How so?

The answer lies in Jesus Christ – his teaching, his example and who he is – God with us. But even more that this the true answer lies in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. We will be exploring what difference Good Friday and Easter make to each of us and to the whole world (and even universe) during Holy Week and Easter. My own invitation is for you to come to church during Holy Week and Easter where you might discover or rediscover the invitation God offers to each and every one of us.

I wish you all a very happy Easter.

James