

Give Up Ten

Week 7 - Jay's Story



God is our refuge and provider, and we are part of the body.

Readings

Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
² will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'
³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
⁴ he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

1 Corinthians 12

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit...
... ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

Reflection

One of my favourite Bible passages has become Psalm 91. Once, not that long ago, when I was staying with a friend, we had a habit of praying and of letting the Bible fall open. It fell open at Psalm 91: "You are my protector and defender. You are my God; in you I trust." And I felt, "wow."

God, the Church, is my safety. I know that having God in my life I am never alone. He provides for me. During Lent I fasted although I didn't really know what that was all about. I had done the 12-step programme (through Alcoholics Anonymous) but I didn't really know what that "higher power" was.

Just after Easter, I realised that I needed to go to a food bank. I didn't want to but had to. While I was there, I was given a voucher to come to the cafe that's attached to the church. I didn't come with any intention of joining the church. When I was having my meal, I asked the person who was there what sort of church it was. I told him I have beliefs but wasn't sure in what. He said that, as Christians, we believe in Jesus.

Something just clicked. I could relate it to the 12-step programme and to that sense of being protected by the wings of God. I came to church with an open mind; and found myself putting my hand up at the end of the service.

I got baptised two weeks later. Folks said that was OK. I didn't need to learn lots of stuff before being accepted. It was about your old life ending and your new life beginning. About dying to old life and rising to new life.

Things started to change for me. I'd always been brought up not to show your dirty washing in public. I had felt so very ashamed. That it was all my fault and I had to sort it out myself.

But something started changing. I felt protected, loved. I allowed people to love me. I still struggle with that one. But I feel I have been given a family I never had.

I have refuge in God. He has provided for me.

I remember about a month ago I got a call – out of the blue – about my ESA (Employment Support Allowance) saying that I was entitled to an additional allowance – I had been receiving half the amount I was due. I heard God say to me: “It's time to live now. The drought is over.”

And that sense of belonging. A sense of being loved and protected. A sense of being part of a family.

Over recent months the passage in 1st Corinthians 12 has become more and more special. It's the bit that talks about us being part of a body. I've found myself being part of something; a needed, necessary part. And how each part of the body cares and rejoices in the successes of others. It's really special to feel a part of something. That I am valuable. That I am not this worthless, defective piece of rubbish that I always felt I was.

I remember the first time I wrote a poem and Gaz got me to come out the front and read it out. And people were really moved by it. And people came up to me later and said what a gift I had.

And I didn't feel nervous about it. People were not going to laugh at me. I am part of the body. And if I don't make it one week, people will message me to check that I'm OK. In August, when I got COVID, people were messaging me and asking me if I was OK. Could they get me anything. And even people saying that I was missed.

Having spent so much of my life not thinking that I mattered. And suddenly I do, a precious part of the body.

Questions

What struck you about Jay's reflections on Psalm 91 and 1 Corinthians 12?

Can you think of a time when you have felt so deeply appreciated; or been part of such a welcoming and inclusive community?

Prayer

God,

I am grateful to have a loving heavenly father, who will never leave or forsake me, my rock, refuge and strength.

With your Angels wings wrapped round me I am safe and will come to no harm when the enemy attacks and tries to destroy me.

You have provided an earthly family who support and guide me, who show me I'm worthy of love that I am important and belong.

You have placed people in my path who showed me a way out of my financial strife and hardship and told me, "The drought is over it's time to live."

I am a new creation in you, the misdeeds of my past no longer restrict and define me.

I am a part of your family and have value in society.

Thank you.

Amen.

Thank you

Thank you for journeying with us through Lent and we hope you have a blessed Easter as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and his continued presence with us.

We are so grateful to the people who have shared their stories of finding God in the midst of the struggle against poverty and have given us glimpses of the ways in which we can be Church together, loving mercy, doing justice and walking humbly with God.

If you have been inspired to support our work financially you can find out how to [donate to the Trussell Trust](#). Every donation will bring us closer to ending the need for food banks in the UK.