

Ramblings from the Rectory

Dear Friends,

I woke up this morning with a smile on my face. As I write this, I keep being distracted by the sun shining brightly, by the birds and the business of the natural world outside of my window. I can smell the coffee brewing too. On mornings like this I feel on top of the world. It's a great feeling.

There are though mornings that are far less bright. Mornings of grey cloud and drizzle. Sometimes, the sun can be shining outside, but inside all is still grey. Sadness, is a fact of life. Sometimes, I've messed up and feel the weight of my stupidity, particularly if my foolishness has hurt another. Sometimes, there is nothing that I can put my finger on, the greyness just is.

It is days like that when I need encouragement. I look for that encouragement from God, directly through his Spirit. I often find that when I have troubles I can offer them to him, and I feel them lifted, completely, or just a little. Sometimes, I know that I just have to hold that unseen hand and carry on, encouraged by those around me.

Then I'm in the sunshine again. When I am, I try to remember the feel of the grey. I want to remember so that I can be encouragement for someone who is feeling far from bright and cheerful. Perhaps with a word, perhaps just sitting beside someone and being company in a hard time.

That thought of being encouragement for others, I realise is a great privilege: A great privilege because by doing that I am being Christ to them, here and now. I am being like Barnabas, that great figure of the early church. I read about Barnabas accompanying Paul, and I'm often tempted to relegate him to being Paul's side-kick, when in fact it is Barnabas who is Paul's mentor. It is Barnabas who searches out Paul, brings him to Jerusalem and really gets him started on his path to being a great evangelist (see Acts 9.27). The name Barnabas means "Son of Encouragement", or "Son of Comfort", and this Barnabas is well named.

When Paul refuses to work with Mark, it is Barnabas who defends him (Acts 15.36-41). It is Barnabas who is able to forgive, and encourage Mark to be what God can help him to be. Early tradition has it was this encouraged Mark who went on to write the Gospel associated with his name*. Whether this is true or not, it is the comfort and encouragement of Godly people like Barnabas that is so sorely needed, by me, and by so many in this changing and unpredictable world.

The Church remembers Barnabas each year on 11th June. That Monday pray that you and I might be more like Barnabas; more forgiving, comforting and encouraging, day by day.

God bless, Nigel.

* Now disputed by many Bible scholars.