

Just a Foundation

Isaiah 58^{9-end}; Psalm 103¹⁻⁸; Hebrews 12^{18-end}; Luke 13¹⁰⁻¹⁷

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations.
[Isaiah 58¹²]*

As we open this new chapter of our life together (aware that there is still some physical work to do - but a great deal to do spiritually, too) the last thing we want to hear from the lips of Jesus when he addresses us is, **you hypocrites**. To avoid that, we work together to build:

✠ **A Place where Worship is Inspired:**

As we come here we should always be aware that we are in the presence of the **living God** and so **reverence** and **awe** shape how we approach him.

At one level, we honour God in our punctuality and in our dress - small things, perhaps, but in these things we are saying to our selves that worship is something different to the rest of life.

I love the way in which Hebrews tells us that we join **innumerable angels in festal assembly**. How good it is to be back in Church and to join our angels again - and they remind us that we join a party that began before time was created and will last beyond the end of time.

Our aim is that this is a place where all become aware of the presence of God and that their hearts are lifted in worship.

✠ **A Place where Psalm 103 becomes a Reality:**

In an age where soundbites command attention and every business needs its USP, Psalm 103 provides this for us. The summary of what God does is excellent: God **forgives all your iniquities; heals all your diseases; redeems your life; crowns you with steadfast love and mercy; satisfies you with good;** renews your youth **like the eagle**.

Our effectiveness as a community of God's people is not measured by the Church of England's preoccupation with statistics, but in how lives are transformed by God's grace. There is nothing more effective in gathering outsiders to worship than the people of God enjoying the new life God gives.

✠ **A Place where Rules are broken so that People are Healed and God is Glorified:**

One thing that we learn from Jesus is that people matter more than anything else in the economy of grace. The woman who had been **crippled for 18 years** took precedence over the rules that restricted what should be done. Jesus wasn't just out to upset people, but the result was that **she stood up straight** and then, much more importantly, she **began praising God**.

The only rule we can't break is the rule of love: it is this one thing that sums up what the Church is for - to love God and to love our neighbour. This isn't the weak love that has no backbone, but a love like God's that embraces those who know their need or grace, but is robust enough to stand against injustice and to resist evil; a love that is blind to human divisions yet sees clearly the potential in each individual; a love that is pure in motive yet willing to get its hands dirty to bring God into any situation. It is the love that reflects the love of God in Christ on the cross.

Literally, the Greek for *hypocrite*, is someone who wears a mask. Hopefully, we are done with masks (especially dust masks) and that this place and our whole beings will reflect the glory of God. That is our foundation for growth.