

Sunday Reflection

10th May 2020

Rev. Roger Smith

Reflection for 10 May – based on Ephesians 4: 1-16

Today's bible passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians starts with the words: 'As a prisoner for the Lord' – St Paul was experiencing another kind of lockdown! He was writing from prison.

And the passage ends like this: 'From (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work' (v.16).

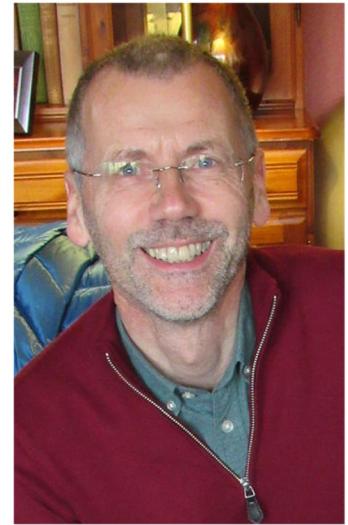
Ligaments play an important part in the human body – they connect the bones together so each part is joined to every other part. The ligaments help make us one body.

I looked up the word Paul uses, translated 'ligament' and found its literal meaning is 'that which connects'. I think it's worth pausing and reflecting on 'that which connects' us.

In our current lockdown, what is it or who is it that connects us with others? A lot of people have commented on how we've come to appreciate people we often take for granted. We all appreciate the work of doctors and nurses and other frontline staff in the NHS but what about the people who deliver PPE and other vital supplies? When we could go to a restaurant, we'd appreciate the efforts of those who prepared and served our meal but what about the people who come to this country to pick fruit and vegetables, drivers who transport it, supermarket workers turning up for work and the people who deliver food to our homes, low paid workers and good neighbours? 'That which connects'.

When Paul uses this expression here, he's talking about the body of Christ, the church. What connects us with one another? We can't meet together just now, no physical connection, no face-to-face contact but we're still connected! Sometimes in different ways: all of a sudden the person who can upload a video to YouTube is a vital ligament in the body of Christ. Musicians have to be incredibly ingenious to sing and play together. For the congregation learning to worship online and delivering paper copies to those not online is all 'that which connects' us. And so, as Paul puts it, 'the whole body ... grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work'.

Today is the start of Christian Aid Week. It has to be done differently this year but it's still just as vital a reminder that the body of Christ is never limited to one locality but spans the whole globe and those of us who have more have a Christian duty to support those who have so much less: 'the whole body joined and held together ... in love'. Each of us needs to look for opportunities (not just in Christian Aid Week) to really connect with the worldwide body of Christ.



My final thought is that all this is true right now. It could be tempting to get into a mindset that says: Let's just get by for now, we can properly get back to life in all its fulness when 'things get back to normal'. But that's not the message we find in the bible.

When the people of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years, God was powerfully at work amongst them, not waiting until they reach the promised land. Jesus constantly proclaimed the Kingdom was here and now if his listeners could only open their eyes and see it.

This coronavirus crisis might be a really tough time for you or you might feel that you're coping with it quite well. Whichever's true for you (and it's probably a bit of both) seek now 'that which connects' and discover that it's true right now that 'from Christ the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work'.

Roger Smith

A prayer

Amazing God,
you are more gracious and surprising
than I can comprehend.
How else could it be that you choose me
to be part of your body, the church?

I look around at all those who are
more talented and less inhibited than me,
those who understand complex things and can speak eloquently.

Yet you persist, calling my name,
assuring me of gifts I didn't even know I had,
welcoming my frailty and my many needs
and incorporating them into the work of your Kingdom,
where love and justice, peace and joy
take root and flourish.

I'm sorry for the times when I deny your gifts,
lack courage to play my part
and undermine the unity of your body.

And so today,
I resolve to make a fresh start,
to rejoice in all the blessings you shower upon me,
to give thanks daily for the people you put alongside me
and praise you anew for calling me
to life, service and
partnership with
you.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.

