

It's a beautiful sunny week in Redditch, but wherever we are this week, my prayer is that we can all enjoy every day as a gift from God, part of his gracious provision for us. In connection with this I have recorded a series of pastoral talks on Grace and Truth, looking at how we apply these twin concepts to ourselves and our lives as Christians. You can find it on YouTube if you follow this link:

<https://youtu.be/-cQl0JKUwQ0>

The Lord bless you and deepen your understanding as you listen.

The gradual easing of the lockdown can be somewhat disorientating, as we have been taking extensive measures to defend ourselves from infection, only to be told to relax that gradually in a manner that may not always seem safe, consistent or make perfect sense. This is totally understandable; it is so hard to make a "one size fits all" rule at the best of times, and we have never come this way before. We will want to ask the Lord to give us a balanced view, that is, to walk in His truth, avoiding the ditches of frustration and fear.

Part of our challenge is to be light on our feet, that is, to be able to continually adjust to whatever the new reality is, without making a song and dance about it. We are not moving from a total lockdown straight to a new normal, but travelling towards that goal in a gradual manner, so that the ground may feel less solid under our feet until matters finally resolve themselves.

As I have warned throughout the crisis, it remains important to avoid speculation and to stick to whatever the current instructions are. Informed guesses or expressed opinions are not facts; we will want to be careful not to be drawn in to believing something that may be true in the future but may not. What we do know is that the general direction of the government is to ease the lockdown restrictions, in a manner not dissimilar to some European countries such as France, Spain and Italy who were ahead of the curve in terms of infection rates and then the decline of cases of Covid-19. We thank God that we are in a situation where the number of those infected and the number of deaths really is in decline, and we will want to pray that people will be sensible to keep to safe ways of being as outlined by the government so that we do not have a "second spike". The Church of England is being especially cautious in the recommencing of worship in church buildings as none of us want to be a possible source of a local hotspot for the disease.

While we finalise preparations for the opening of church buildings for private prayer, we are also aware that regulations are being made ready for the resumption of church services at some point next month, although this will not be a full resumption of the way things were before the advent of the virus. In fact, we will never go back to the way things were before the virus. For example, Holy Trinity Redditch will not be abandoning all their online services, and I expect I will continue to post talks on Facebook and YouTube.

On this latter point, if you are not used to reading the letters of the New Testament, a helpful introductory series of talks intended to encourage us all to get into this part of the Bible has been posted on the Café Church Tardebigge Facebook page and YouTube channel.

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). Today is a day of opportunity to grow in the knowledge of God and rejoice in all that He is, and all that He gives us.

Yours in Christ Jesus, Saviour and Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard", written on a white rectangular background.