



20th January 2019

James Dunne writes.....

Of late I have found myself considering the contrast that exists in life, of struggle and suffering leading to growth within ourselves and a richer experience of life.

Last Sunday morning we reflected on the Apostle Paul's struggle with a particular issue in his life and how God's purpose was being worked out in that struggle (2 Corinthians Ch. 12 v 5-10). God's response to Paul's prayer was not what Paul was expecting, but it was one that he came to understand.

The Book of Hebrews, in the New Testament, tells us that Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb. Ch. 5 v 8). We also see that Jesus suffered terribly in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross, but this was a precursor to resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and salvation being available to all.

Perhaps there is a lesson of perspective in this. I have written before of the Christian tendency to pray for escape from the storm, and the Jewish tendency to pray for strength in the storm. Current Christian culture tends to pray for a preferred outcome, making assumptions about God's purposes rather than seeking an understanding of what God is doing.

I had a conversation with a friend last week. The conversation was about the nature of knowledge and understanding. We begin our life with negligible knowledge and understanding and over time things change. We acquire knowledge and a framework of understanding and we begin to understand our world. We find ourselves able to navigate and manage our interactions with others. Everything is rosy until we find ourselves in a situation where our framework of understanding becomes a hindrance rather than a help. Either our framework is able to adapt to the new situation or we find ourselves misunderstanding events around us and misinterpreting people's actions. Our knowledge and understanding turns from a constructive aid to a mental prison.

The question becomes how can we escape this prison?

Throughout history God has used suffering to teach and reveal to his people fundamental truths. From the Exile of the Israelites in Egypt, their forty-year wandering in the desert, and their 70-year exile in Babylon, we see a pattern of failure, suffering, and restoration.

So, if we find ourselves in a situation which we experience as suffering, it may be just because we live in a fallen world. But it may be that God is in the process of deepening our knowledge and broadening our understanding.

Notices

New Small Group

If anyone is interested in finding out more about Centring prayer, April is starting a new small group on Tuesday evenings. For more information contact April on 07951119271

'Coffee Morning with Kids'

Meeting up again on Mon 10th Feb and monthly after that. All welcome. See Rachel Jolly for more details.

Gill Gifford

On Monday 28th Jan at 7.30pm Gill will be at here at ECB to share a message of encouragement. All welcome!

BEN BISCOE- CHURCH PLANTING TRAINING OPPORTUNITY IN CALIFORNIA.

Please pray for Ben as he settles into life in California and starts to learn about church planting from his former pastor.

He has to be self-supporting as his visa doesn't allow him to be employed. Please talk to Debbie Winson or Rose Hunt to sign up for his newsletter and/or make a donation to him.

ROTAS

If you need to check rotas please log on to Churchbuilder.

ECB DIARY

20th Jan	10.30am	Informal Worship Hospitality - Table Talk/Cherish Leader: Nik Christensen Preacher: Erika Biscoe
	7.00pm	Evening Service (café open from 6.30) What is Hospitality? Leader/Preacher: Ian Biscoe
22nd Jan	9.00am	Prayers
	7.00pm	Prayers
	7.30pm	Prison Fellowship
23rd Jan	10.30am	Oasis Small Group
25th Jan	9.30am	Cherish Group
26th Jan	9.30am	Cherish
27th Jan	10.30am	Communion Service Emmaus Road, The Hospitality of God Leader: Carol Hill Preacher: April Beckerleg
	7.00pm	Evening Service (Café open from 6.30) Hospitality as attentiveness to God Leader: Ian Biscoe Preacher: Katie Jenkinson

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All notices to Admin Team by 7pm Wednesday newsletter@emmanuelbicester.org.uk