

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus
Philippians 4. 4-7 (NIV).

These verses present quite a challenge - to always rejoice in God - to not be anxious about anything and to be thankful. And yet the promise is a peace that is like no other. God's peace, that even in our present situation - does two things - it transcends understanding and it guards our hearts and our minds.

I've been struck by how often the Bible talks about God knowing our hearts and whilst that might make us feel slightly apprehensive - what a comfort that we don't have to pretend to God! We are all reacting differently to this lockdown and the stresses that it inevitably brings. Those who love being out and about and gain their energy from interaction with people, are probably feeling a bit stir-crazy. Those who long for a bit more solitude in life and a slower pace are revelling in the quietness, and yet may be feeling a bit guilty that they're not more discomforted. Whichever category you fit into or are somewhere in between - we can be assured that God knows our hearts and our personalities - he created us - each one of us to be unique.

So, if we are someone who is climbing the walls - God understands that need for interaction with people and whilst we may not be able to do that physically at the moment - we have a heavenly Father that understands. Similarly, if we are revelling in the solitude - we can honour Him with that too and offer that experience to Him. God is not a headteacher in the sky who is blaming us for our feelings, but a loving Father who is tender with His children.

Psalms 103 tells us that "as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust".

So, if you're feeling a bit dusty, take heart: there is someone who understands.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your peace that transcends our understanding and guards our hearts and minds. Thank you that you understand our struggles and are tender towards us and filled with compassion.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Mad Berry April 2020.