

Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



May 2020

Over a month now into this “lockdown”, and what started as a bizarre total change to our “doing church” has become almost a new normal. Possibly, by the time the next of these magazines appears, some relaxations to the lockdown lifestyle will have been announced. But right now we still have no idea precisely when we might be permitted to start meeting together in person.

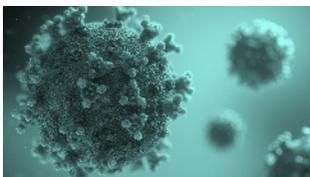
Time for some reflection.

1) First of all, I want to commend you *all* for the way you have adapted to this new way of doing things.

I am both startled and delighted that so many of you are joining our current “meetings”, and

how quickly you have got up to speed on this.

There are currently more people participating in all of these meetings than we were getting in person, prior to the Virus. Do you think this new setup has perhaps made us value fellowship in Christ more than previously?



You've borne with our getting to grips with this new technology patiently. And you've been using more traditional tech (phones and e-mail) to keep in touch with each, too.

Good job, people!

2) Next, I wonder if we are learning some stuff that we could continue to make use of, when things are “back to normal”.

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Bear in mind that on the agenda for that Church Members' Meeting that was cancelled at the end of March was an item about whether we should consider changing our Sunday evening meeting time during the dark winter months. Some people have been very wary of coming out, driving in the dark, and braving the wet and wind of our traditional winter weather.

Well, does what we have been doing these last few weeks give us some pointers about how we *could* change things? In fact, if we were to get Broadband put in at the chapel, could we have "hybrid" cafe church meetings? Food and drink for those going in person - meeting in person would still be the preferred option - but for those who really can't, can they join us via the smart TV screen instead?

Of course, this could pander to laziness. That particular scenario could prove to be the *worst* of several possible worlds.

But could we actually be learning some new skills that we can use to advantage in future? Life is not going to be totally back to what it used to be, when the Virus has finally been beaten back. Businesses will continue to use some of the tele-commuting options that have been forced upon

us, I'm sure. Why not churches, too? Why not *us*?

3) Why now? Not that I claim prophetic insights here, but why 2020 instead of some other year?

First, think about what we've already mentioned, all this new technology stuff. If the Virus had hit back in the 20th century, before the massive explosion of the Net, computers and mobile phones, we would be stuck with letters and phone calls which were *expensive*. Continued fellowship as we have been experiencing it in the last few weeks - although admittedly not perfect - would still have seemed like remote sci-fi nonsense.

It might seem pretty grim now. It would have been a *lot* more grim 40 years ago!

Second, just consider the weather. We've just had, I heard it called, "the sunniest April on record". Of the various times I've been to do an early-Saturday morning big shop during lockdown, only once was there the low-level probability of perhaps some light rain.

But not so long ago, didn't we have nearly a month of all but continuous rain? Think of how much worse things would have



seemed if all the social-distancing queuing had to be done in the wet!

So I have to insist that there are some elements of God's mercy to us, alongside this wake-up call to the world in general. What we are undergoing as a nation is not great, but it could have seemed *much* more grim, apart from this grace of God.

3) The two earlier points I am more comfortable with. But I wonder about the particular year itself. Warning: speculative comment ahead! You may intensely disagree with this one!

But there is something about the number itself. Perfect sight used to be (and perhaps still is) referred to as "20-20 vision" - presumably scoring 20 out of 20 on both eyes. I can remember the annual health checks that my employers used to give me, including an eye test. And when for the first time I *didn't* score 20-20 it came as a bit of a shock - or possibly a blow to my pride, on reflection.

So then you think of "vision" in a broader sense. A projection of the future. I can remember an interview at another church, years back: "what is your *vision* for this church?" A sort of mixture of meanings, and difficult to say exactly what people mean by it. I think I place it as insightful hope, a target worth effort to achieve. Oth-

ers will stir into the pot of meaning the nuance of low-level divine leading or calling or even revelation.

And Christians have tapped into this "20-20 vision" thing too. There was a church-planting project for Birmingham: to plant 20 new churches by this year. Of course, it was called "20-20 vision". (I did see in a Christian news report that they're not necessarily thinking to aim to plant 30 further churches in the next decade. It could get increasingly challenging as the century progresses!)

So I just wonder if there is some intentional irony, from God's point of view, that something like Coronavirus has totally blindsided the whole world, *in this year of 2020*.

We all, as individual and as nations, had our ideas and plans for the dawning year, back when the fireworks were being let off around the world as 2019 was drawing to a close. Who could have guessed that within a few months just about all of them would have been cancelled or indefinitely put on hold?

The year turned, and the sports pundits were proclaiming that nobody could see any way that a certain Premier League team *wouldn't* be lifting the trophy by Easter.



That is precisely it. *No-body* foresaw this. Yes, some things ... *most* things ... would have been equally unpredictable in any year. But ... 2020 ... “20-20”! ... was there a better year to be reminded, as the Scriptures say, ...

life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”
(James 4:13-15)

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your

If only I could have realised, and put that on our church text for the year!

Peter Ham

New e-mail address
John and Jeanette Carter: johnjeanettecarter@gmail.com

You can contact Peter Ham, TRBC’s pastor, by phone on (01209) 212442 or (07818) 078135.
You can also e-mail peter.ham@live.co.uk,

Church website:
www.tuckingmillbaptist.org.uk

Zoom meetings - “online church”:
Still seeking to perfect this art, but we’ve now settled on weekly meetings as follows:

Sundays: 10.30 and 6.30
Thursdays 7.00

	10.30 a.m.	6.30 p.m. (cafe church)
3 rd May	Phil Willetts	Psalm 95
10 th May	Esther 8:9 - 10:3	Following on from a.m.
17 th May	Matthew 14:1-12	Following on from a.m.
24 th May	Matthew 14:13-21	Following on from a.m.
31 st May	David Skull?	

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Is it Ever Right to Be Angry at God?

by John Piper, on desiringGod.org

I learned recently that when a person uses the words, "Is it right to be angry at God?" he may be asking a very different question. He may be asking, "Is it right to express anger at God?" These are not the same question, and the answer is not always the same.

The question usually arises in times of great suffering and loss. Disease threatens to undo all your dreams. Death takes a precious child from your family. Utterly unexpected desertion and divorce shake the foundations of your world. At these times people can become very angry, even at God.



Is this right? To answer this question we might, perhaps, ask the angry person, Is it always right to get angry at God? In other words, can a person get angry at God for every reason, and still be right? Was it right, for example, for Jonah to be angry at God's mercy on Nineveh? "God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry" (Jonah 3:10-4:1). I assume the answer would be, No. We should not get angry at God for just any reason.

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But then we would ask: Which deeds of God is it right to get angry with, and which is it not? Now this is harder to answer. The truth begins to close in on the angry heart.

What about the things that displease us? Are these the acts of God that are good to be angry at? Is it the acts of God that hurt us? "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deuteronomy 32:39). Are these the acts that justify us in directing our anger at God? Or is it his choice to permit the devil to harass and torture us? "The LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, [Job] is in your hand; only spare his life.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:6-7). Does the decision of God to permit Satan to hurt us and our children justify our anger at him?

Or come at it from the other side. What is anger? The common definition is: "An intense emotional state induced by displeasure" (Merriam-Webster). But there is an ambiguity in this definition. You can be "displeased" by a thing or by a person. Anger at a thing does not contain indignation at a choice or an act. We simply don't like the effect of the thing:



the broken clutch, or the grain of sand that just blew in our eye, or rain on our picnic. But when we get angry at a person, we are displeased with a choice they made and an act they performed. Anger at a person always implies strong disapproval. If you are angry at me, you think I have done something I should not have done.

This is why being angry at God is never right. It is wrong - always wrong - to disapprove of God for what he does and permits. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25). It is arrogant for finite, sinful creatures to disapprove of God for what he does and permits. We may weep over the pain. We may be angry at sin and Satan. But God does only what is right. "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments" (Revelation 16:7).

But many who say it is right to be angry with God really mean it is right to express anger at God. When they hear me say it is wrong to be angry with God, they think I mean "stuff your feelings and be a hypocrite." That's not what I mean. I mean it is always wrong to disapprove of God in any of his judgments.

But if we do experience the sinful emotion of anger at God, what then? Shall we add the sin of hypocrisy to the sin of anger? No. If we feel it, we should confess it to God. He knows it anyway. He sees our hearts. If anger at God is in our heart, we may as well tell him so, and then tell him we are sorry, and ask him to help us put it away by faith in his goodness and wisdom.

When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he removed forever the wrath of God from our lives. God's disposition to us now is entirely mercy, even when severe and disciplinary (Romans 8:1). Therefore, doubly shall those in Christ turn away from the terrible spectre of anger at God. We may cry, in agony, "My God, My God, where are you?" But we will follow soon with, "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

Creeds, maps and getting to America

from C S Lewis' *Mere Christianity*

I remember once when I had been giving a talk to the R.A.F., an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, 'I've no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I'm a religious man too. I know there's a God. I've felt Him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that's just why I don't believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about Him. To anyone who's met the real thing they all seem so petty and pedantic and unreal!'

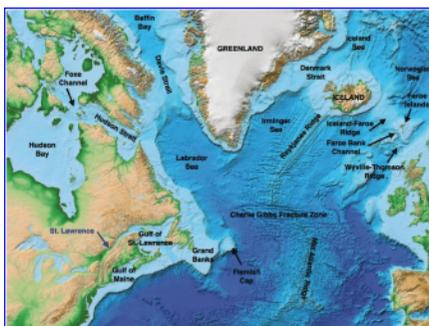


Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he had probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real to something less real.

In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of coloured paper.

But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only coloured paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together.

In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America.



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by phone on (01209) 212442 or (07818) 078135.
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