

Dear Friends

Like me, I'm sure most of us are familiar with the first couplet of this poem, but I'd never read the rest of it.

Leisure by W.H. Davies

***WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare? —***

***No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep and cows:***

***No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:***

***No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:***

***No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance:***

***No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began?***

***A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.***

For some of us, we've had more than enough time to 'stand and stare'; for others, even the thought of having a spare minute would have been a luxury indeed. But if we take anything positive away from this pandemic it will be that when everything stopped and the streets emptied, nature took over.

How many times did we hear on the radio and television, people marvelling at being able to hear birdsong for the first time, especially those living in cities? Spending isolation time in the garden meant we were able to watch the leaves unfurl, shoots burst through the soil, blossom and flowers invite bees and other insects, tadpoles turn into frogs, and wildlife appear in all sorts of odd places they had never ventured to before. Remember the mountain goats strolling down the main street in Llandudno?

Hopefully it will have raised awareness in all of us how precious our natural environment is, and encourage us all to take green issues more seriously in future. In fact, if we hadn't had the pandemic, our sermon series in church throughout June and July was to be about climate change and the environment. It could be the most positive thing come out of this global disaster.

And so when our lives slowly start to return to 'normal', when our daily routines start to re-establish themselves, let's try to factor in a few moments each day to 'stand and stare' at the beauty and wonder around us, and thank God for it!

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Luke 12:27)



This poem that Angela found reminded me of our headteacher (Miss Johnson) who quoted it often when reminding us that to be bored was to demonstrate a total lack of appreciation of the simple things in life, which were, she told us, far more enduring than material pleasures. I'm not sure that we fully appreciated her "words of wisdom" at the time, but of course she made a good point.

Lockdown for some of us has been anything but a time to "stop and stare". New and previously unfamiliar patterns of work, concerns about job and financial security have added to our cares. On top of that worries about our health or that of our family and friends have been an extra burden we have had to carry along with all our other worries. However, for many of us, we have been able to take this time to "stop and stare" at our lives and take stock. We have been able to think, maybe for the first time in years, about what is really important to us.

As I write this, the words of the chorus of the Matt Redman song "The Heart of Worship" have been playing in my mind.

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about you,
It's all about you, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about you,
It's all about you, Jesus*

This song was written at a time when his church was going through a spiritually tough time. The worship band was making new and influential music yet something was missing. The pastor asked the congregation what they were bringing to God or were they just consumers soaking up music and worship they enjoyed. As a result, the church stripped away all the distractions and diversions and concentrated on Jesus, the heart of worship. A friend told me only last week about how her church is having to provide more than one Sunday online worship service because some of the members refuse to engage with services that don't include their favoured style of liturgy/music/ bible translation. I felt so very sad to hear this.

We all have our preferred styles but surely at the heart of it is Jesus. He simply asks us to come to Him as we are, broken, imperfect and in need of His grace and love, to simply "stop and stare" at the cross in awe and wonder of what He has done for us.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Take care and stay safe .

With love

Angela and Liz