Clergy Letter: Lent and Lockdown

Who would have thought that the Christian season of Lent would ever take place during a Lockdown? As usual I am writing this letter a while before you are reading it, and yet I feel fairly sure (and sad to say) that even during March and April some form of Lockdown is probably still in place.

Lent itself started with Ash Wednesday on the 17th February, so by the 1st March we are already part-way through the period. I wonder if you decided to mark Lent in a particular way this year.

Often people use the opportunity to practice some self-discipline by denying themselves something that they especially like – or, perhaps, on a more positive note – others revive a particular ‘spiritual discipline’ for example, reading the Bible regularly or another theological book, or concentrating on their prayer life or finding ways to raise money for a favourite charity.

All these ideas are worth considering (and it is not too late to start now) but of course the experience of Lockdown can often make everything feel like it is too much like hard work.

So where do Lent and Lockdown coincide? I would like to suggest that when Jesus Christ spent 40 days alone in the wilderness, he would have felt many of the emotions that we are now experiencing during Lockdown: a sense of fear for the future; a sense of vulnerability; a sense of isolation from loved ones; a sense of harsh responsibility for one’s own wellbeing.

We have had Lockdown imposed on us. You might think that Jesus ‘chose’ to go into the wilderness for *his* Lockdown, but Matthew Chapter 4 tells us that Jesus  ‘was **led** up by the Spirit into the wilderness’ – it seems as if he had no choice either.

And how did he deal with this enforced solitude and many temptations to ‘break the rules’?

He turned to God’s word and found courage, strength, and comfort. At the end of his ‘Lockdown’ he was ready to return to his ‘normal life’ and yet he had been completely transformed by his experience.

Somehow, I think that our own Lockdown will have a similar transformational effect.

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| **DOPAMINE – The Reward Chemical**   * *Completing a task* * *Doing self-care activities* * *Eating food* * *Celebrating little wins* | **OXYTOCIN – The Love Hormone**   * *Playing with a dog or cat* * *Listen to music* * *Do something nice for someone* * *Give a compliment* |
| **SEROTONIN – The Mood Stabilizer**   * *Meditating* * *Running* * *Sun exposure* * *Walk in nature* * *Swimming* * *Cycling* | **ENDORPHIN – the Pain Killer**   * *Laughing heartedly* * *Watch a comedy* * *Dark Chocolate* * *Exercising* |

In the meantime, I have come across this ‘Spiritual Lockdown Medicine Cabinet’ with examples of ways to encourage our body’s own natural defences against the ravages of Lockdown. How about daily choosing to do one activity from each box?

May it bring healing to the soul.

Your Rector

Reverend Mandy