

Easter 2 / 3 26th April 2020

Easter 2 / Easter 3 What we'd planned for Cuxton	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061	Psalm 116 <i>Choir please choose five hymns.</i>
26th April Easter 2 / Easter 3 What we'd planned for Halling	11.00 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061	MP 187 Praise My Soul Gloria in Excelsis Deo 151 Majesty 149 Low in the Grave Psalm 116 253 We Have Come Into His 281 You Shall Go Out

If you dropped a 10lb canon ball and a 20lb canon ball from the top of a tower, which would fall faster? Discounting wind resistance, they would both hit the ground at the same time. It's the Law of Gravity, one of the basic laws of Science. Science is a great blessing to the human race. For a start, it is closely tied up with wonder. We wonder at the world in which we live. Wondering, we are inspired to study the universe and, the more we study it, the more wonderful we discover the world to be.

Science is also useful. An understanding of Science enables us to design better buildings, better planes, trains and automobiles. Science informs our farming. Science also warns us of the peril of excessive and inappropriate developments which pollute the land, the oceans and the atmosphere and lead to global warming and possible environmental catastrophe. Science could also be our guide if we are motivated to seek ways to deal with such problems.

Science is a two-edged sword. It teaches us how to make fearsome weapons of war but it also shows us how to feed the hungry, to heal the sick and to make the life of everyone on this planet safer, more secure and more comfortable if only we could make up our minds that that is what we want to achieve.

The government is continually referring to the scientific advice on which it bases its policies with regard to Covid 19. How can we reduce the rate of infection? How can we test for the disease? How can we treat those who are infected? How can we protect those who risk infection themselves in caring for others? Can we develop a vaccine which will protect people from becoming infected? These are all scientific questions and we look to scientists to try to find the answers.

It pained many of us that our bishops and archbishops told us to stop doing many of the things we would normally do in our churches because of the corona virus. Meeting together for prayer, especially Holy Communion, preaching the Gospel, visiting the sick and the poor and the lonely, these are all the things we would naturally want to do in any kind of emergency and we have been forbidden from doing them. The answers, we are told, to the problems caused by the corona virus are scientific, matters for a government guided by experts in epidemiology etc., not for the Church. If we insist on meeting and visiting, we shall actually make matters worse by infecting one another and the wider community.

Science is possible because Nature works in predictable ways. There is the Law of Gravity. Objects always do fall to earth at a particular speed (allowing for wind resistance). Laws govern the way electricity behaves in everything from a violent thunderstorm to a torch

battery. Magnets behave predictably. The Laws of motion make it possible to drive safely. And so on and so forth. Nature works in accordance with scientific laws. Indeed, there seems to be an essential unity in Nature such that quite a lot of leading scientists think it ought to be possible to devise a single Theory of Everything which ultimately explains all the observed phenomena that there are. These Laws of Science are also the Laws of God. The world is the way it is because this is how God made it. This is how God made the world – a world which obeys scientific laws and behaves regularly and predictably – and we can understand something of these laws, of how the world works, because God gives us the gifts to do so. The fact that the universe runs in accordance with law is God's gift to us. The fact that we can make sense of these laws is God's gift to us too. Many scientists deny religion. Many scientists are inspired by their faith. But, either way, they achieve what they achieve in understanding the world by the grace of God.

The bishops and archbishops have laid great stress on the need to continue to pray – to pray alone, maybe also to pray with others linked by phones or the internet, to be conscious that we are part of a worldwide fellowship offering prayers to God for the present pandemic and in all circumstances always. The Church is not irrelevant to our country's response to this virus. Christians are not merely in the way of the scientists, medics, technicians and politicians who are out there working to deal with the problems Covid 19 is creating for the world. Our prayers are an aspect of the solution. In praying, we are working with God to bring about His Will – *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven*. We may, in part, become His instruments in answering our prayers. Perhaps we can bring cheer or comfort to troubled people, albeit by phone or email. Maybe we can help to ensure that our neighbours have what they need. We could possibly donate to those charities which are running out of money as their normal fund-raising becomes impossible but the needs they seek to meet become ever greater. Our prayers support the doctors and nurses and scientists and care workers and shop workers and drivers and bureaucrats and politicians and all those working out there on the front line in accordance with God's scientific laws (whether they know Him or not) to bring about healing and restoration. Neither do I by any means rule out the possibility of what we might call a miracle, the supernatural, that God might intervene in the affairs of the universe to do what is beyond the scope of His natural laws and deliver us from the virus in some even more wonderful way than through natural processes.

Natural Law, Science. The world works by God's Laws such as gravity and relativity and thermodynamics. There are also laws such as the Ten Commandments, laws setting out how human beings should behave towards God, towards one another and towards the world in general. These are laws we can choose whether or not to obey. They are summarised in the command to all-encompassing love. It is only when we obey these laws that the world can truly be healed and at peace. It is for this reason, therefore, that a crisis such as this recalls us to the need for repentance, to repent of everything in our lives which falls short of the perfect love which is God's Will for our lives. Only so shall we know wholeness and peace. *Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Joel ii. 13. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us. Daniel ix. 9, 10.*