

Tiger@Ten: Thought for the Day 8 March 2022 Seasons of change and hope

Now this question is going to exclude some of our members – but men, it's only temporary so keep listening!

Did anyone go to the women's breakfast on Saturday?

It was a bit like Tiger@Ten – a lovely group - except there were no men and there were more of us – about 90 – and we were of all different ages and stages.

And that is what the morning was about: Our seasons of change.

I don't know about you but I came away feeling I had been a part of a big family saga dealing with all of life's changes – new jobs, lost jobs. New arrivals – babies, grandchildren. New departures – teenagers going to college, the loss of dear friends and family.

For all of us here at Tiger@Ten we are at a similar stage of life and have already seen many of these changes personally.

Sometimes we may have been excited or fearful of the change, or been bitter and resentful. But also we will have matured and grown – and we will have seen good things come out of change – whatever it was.

Two years ago I did the last TFTD in the Tiger lounge before we went into lockdown after the arrival of Covid. That was a shocking, huge unexpected change that has had an enormous impact on all our lives. At that time I talked about hope and how it drives out fear.

Lockdown proved to be a horrible time with long periods of lonely isolation but it was also a hopeful time when kindness, sympathy and courage stepped forward – the good things countering the bad. In that TFTD I read Psalm 23, especially dwelling on this verse:

*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For You are with me.*

All our hope lies in God, through his son Jesus.

We are now faced with the terrible events unfolding in Ukraine – another huge situation out of our own control. We have all been shocked and disturbed and upset by what's happening. How do we cope with our fears this time? It's always the same answer. Hope drives out fear. And hope comes in Jesus and what he has done for us.

I have been following some Lent readings by the Christian charity Tearfund. And one by the poet Gideon Heugh is so appropriate for us today. His Bible verse was from another Psalm: *Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)*

This is what Gideon wrote:

The situation in Ukraine seems kind of hopeless. So many situations, globally and in our own lives, can seem hopeless.

But we hope anyway. Because hope is a choice. One that we always have. And it is a choice today that is rooted in truth – the truth that hate can't win. Love wins. Hope wins. The truths of the gospel never change, and it's in the darkness that those truths shine brightest.

And as we have heard, the truth of the gospel is Jesus.

So please join me as I choose to turn my face towards Jesus, God's son, who is the good, true shepherd and follow him. He calls us when we read the Bible and he listens when we pray. He is the shepherd who laid down his life for me and you. He went to the cross and died for me and you.

When we go through change we are changed. I believe that however hard the change is, Jesus is there with me, walking through the storms of life and that after the weeping there will be joy.

No matter what lies ahead He is faithful. The more we choose to see that He is in control the more we will love and trust him.

When we are in uncertain, frightening times like now we need to focus on Jesus and look to the cross, not our circumstances. The cross is the guarantee that Jesus will lead us to a place of eternal rest and safety.

And this is the thought I want to give you today: to hold on to hope in the midst of change, and to hold on to all those good things that happen even in dark times.

I am going to leave you with this beautiful poem of hope written by Gideon which he included in his Lent reflection:

A new light arrives

*Buried in the night,
anxious thoughts crowded darkly
around me.*

*The last thing I expect
is a miracle;*

*the last thing I anticipate is God
riding the dawn.*

But then,

*like the only answer we ever need,
a new light arrives,*

splashing grace-paint

on the worn-out canvas of my heart,

and all of a sudden

hope is running along the tops of the trees

wild-eyed

and rampant.