

Reflection Wednesday 9th December

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

⁵Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

In these recent months the last verse of this passage has been of great importance, the call to encourage one another.

There may have been a few who have sailed through the last 9 months with ease but most of us have been through some hard times emotionally, physically or mentally. Paul when writing to the Thessalonians was speaking of staying alert whilst awaiting the return of Christ. In the early Church there was expectation of an imminent return and the call to be ready.

Despite the time moving on there is still that call to be alert for an encounter with Christ. It may or may not be an encounter at his glorious return but encounters with Christ are there day by day if we but open our eyes and look.

Encouraging each other by speaking of our daily encounters with Jesus are of great importance as the do indeed build up each other.

In the years leading up to the arrival of John the Baptist and Jesus on the scene the people of Israel had been waiting for a Messiah but had also been missing the call of a prophet. Had God forgotten his people? Had God given up on them and stayed silent?

In an individual's life and journey of faith there can be times when we feel apart from God, that God has abandoned us. We know that this is not the case but we can easily live by feelings and not facts. Hearing what God is doing in someone else's life can be good for us and there have been occasions when I have discovered that what I have been thinking about has been on the heart and mind of another. In that moment there has been the realisation that I have been in touch with God – or God has been in touch with me – even when I have felt far away.

In this Advent season of waiting and expectancy let us wait with patience whilst encouraging others and being encouraged by others as we share what God is doing with us and through us for His Kingdom and glory not ours.