

Sermon on Wednesday 23 September,

by Rev. Alan Stewart

Advice on being human

I've just finished reading the novel 'The Humans' by Matt Haig. It tells the unlikely story of an alien sent to earth to destroy evidence of a mathematical equation that could lead humans to discover ways of travelling to distant galaxies and polluting them with their particular brand of greed and violence. The alien assumes a human body and a human identity, and, in an often-hilarious way, reports of the strangeness of this species and its unfathomable customs. Disgust at first turns soon to fascination, then appreciation and finally to a deep love of humanity, despite its flaws. To cut a long story short, towards the end, as the alien prepares to leave those humans he's grown to love, he records 98 pieces of advice for a human.

Here are just a few:

Laugh - it suits you.

You shouldn't have been born. Your existence is as close to impossible as can be. To dismiss the impossible is to dismiss yourself.

Don't aim for perfection. Evolution, and life, only happen through mistakes.

Everything matters.

Be alive. That is your supreme duty to the world.

Leonardo da Vinci was not one of you. He was one of us.

If you think something is ugly, look harder. Ugliness is just a failure of seeing.

Happiness is not *out there*. It is *in here*.

Music is how you see things you can't otherwise see. It is the most advanced thing you have. It is a superpower.

If you were to offer your own two-penny's worth of advice for life on earth, what wisdom would you impart?

As Jesus was preparing to leave his friends, in his farewell speech in John, chapters 14-16, he realizes that 3 years with them has only scratched the surface, so he crams in lots of advice and wisdom and reassurance for these humans – things to hold on to.

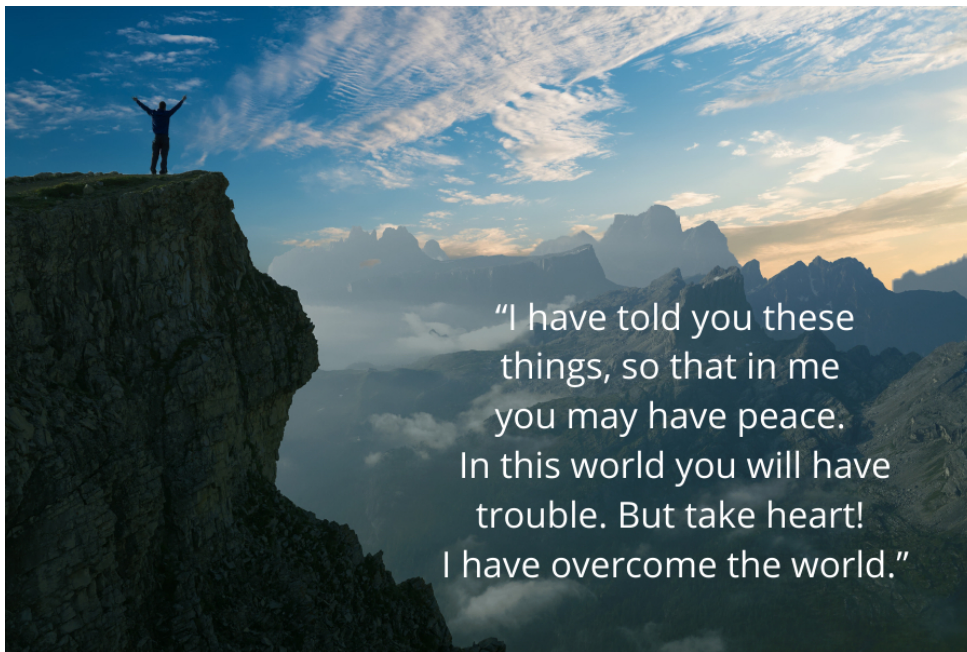
And he says that he'll send his Spirit to uncover and reveal those many other things that they couldn't yet understand; the 'too much', as John says later, 'that all the books in the world couldn't contain it'.

As I read to you some of those last words of Jesus, I'd invite you to invite the Holy Spirit to make clear what, in particular, you need to hear today.... Maybe one phrase or word will just jump out, resonate.... And if something does, hold on to it... because that is not only for those first bewildered disciples, it's also for you.

'I will not leave you... keep my commandments... remain in me... remain in my love... I call you friends... Love each another as I have loved you.... you do not belong to the world... testify about me... They will hate you because of me... you will see me... your grief will be turned to joy... ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.' "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16

¹² “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”



“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”