

Sermon on Wednesday 10 March 2021

by Rev. Alan Stewart

(Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5. 12-18)

The Power of Gratitude

A few weeks ago, I joined the 21 million (and counting) who have now received their first round of vaccinations. I count this a great privilege and I'm overwhelmingly grateful to all who helped pioneer these vaccines and who, day after day, roll out this extraordinary programme.

I know it probably sounds like the clichéd acceptance speech of a Golden Globe winner, but I also thank my God.

Now, religious people are often notoriously guilty of thanking their deity when things go their way, while conveniently letting Him/Her/It off the hook when they don't.

When I say, 'I thank God for the vaccine', however, I'm not crediting the Almighty with the discovery and delivery of this life-saving drug. I'm thanking God for the raw materials and natural processes that enabled our scientists to make this breakthrough.

I'm thanking God for the intellectual sparking of the imaginations that led them to their discovery.

I'm thanking God for the kindness I believe he inspires in the volunteers who give of their time and their care.

I'm thanking God because when something feels like a blessing, there's a need and an instinct in me to acknowledge it.

Gratitude is a powerful thing for both those offering and those receiving. To show appreciation to a person can make their day. I

see gratitude as completing a circle of blessing. When someone blesses us, we return that blessing in the form of thankfulness. Gratitude is good for us. It can transform our perspective, from 'glass half empty' to 'glass half full'. Gratitude awakens us to the mercies and grace that are everywhere; that too often go unnoticed.

Gratitude doesn't always come easy; it is a discipline; a spiritual discipline.

In Mindfulness, there is a practice called 'Ten Finger Gratitude'. Usually, it's practiced at the end of the day but, today, I'd like us to do this exercise as we begin our prayers.

So, I'd ask you to touch the index finger of your right hand to the thumb of the left and, as you hold it there, think of one thing today for which you are grateful... preferably not something big like your health or your family... take time to sift through the smaller things, and when something comes to you, move on to the next finger of the left hand. When you've thought of five, then move on to another five, this time using the index finger of the left hand and with it touching each finger of the right.

