

## **Hinde Street Methodist Church**

Sunday 28 June 2020 11.00am

Pastor Friedbert Fröhlich

### **Sermon on Colossians 1:3-14**

Dear sisters and brothers in London, it is wonderful to read this warm opening of the letter to the Colossians and to think of you. Dear Peter, a good suggestion.

You are not sitting 1.5 metres apart in the pews like us. You are sitting in front of your screens and celebrating worship. Since we have met, I have seen dear people in front of me, a picture of your church and I've discovered that I can still speak a little English. Paul and the Colossians did not know each other personally, yet they were closely connected.

In these times of Corona, connection across borders has become even more important. Living with social distancing restrictions and hygiene regulations is difficult. And as we all know, we Germans follow them to the letter. What do we need? More rules or fewer? I pick something out of the text:

The goal: thank the Lord with joy. I like that. In the end there is no saving the world, we cannot do that anyhow, but we can be happy and grateful as we go. How do we manage that though? Through growth. Aha. So: please grow! But children don't decide before school every day as to whether to grow or not. It just happens. But we already have something to contribute. Children reveal it: curiosity, passion, willingness. Paul adds: Look to Jesus our Saviour. This helps to grow into a life with joy.

I am taken aback by Luther's translation: For the sake of the hope that is ready for you in heaven. Too bad that I would rather have hope here. We need it now: in a life where we don't know what to do with the virus or with Brexit. Probably what he means is that hope feeds on the future that God promises. But it develops in strength here and now. And how can you promote hope? How can I nourish hope? Paul says: It grows from the day you recognize God's grace. When you stop blaming God for everything. When you are ready to recognize your own guilt. Of course, it's easy to point your finger at Trump, Putin, Bolsonaro, Erdogan... But they have not brought the world to the abyss alone - rather our lifestyle, our failure to protect the earth has done this too.

We cannot save the world, but we are starting to do the right thing. And that can even be fun: to pray for each other. That's wonderful. We can listen to each other from London and Leipzig. For me, London is no longer just a charming city: I connect London with people, with you. Let us not stop praying for each other. That we as people and communities accept the challenges and do not lose sight of the goal: with joy.

What should we pray for, Paul? It's clear: we should pray for each other. He makes it more concrete: pray that we recognize and do the will of God, and thus live to please God. For me it is most clear with Jesus, who stood up so convincingly for the life of everyone and gave up on nobody. God will reward us with strength and patience. Patience with God, who doesn't just do what I want. Patience with the world, that does so much wrong. With the church, that has to change. With us, with whom God wants to achieve something. How good that it's not just about performance and success, but also, as we know: with joy. So: redeemed, hopeful, praying for each other, growing in faith, patient but determined through the living power of God, with joy. That sounds right. In London and Leipzig and everywhere in God's world. Hallelujah. Amen.