

11th October 2020 – 10.30 Zoom talk – **Philippians 4:1-9**

There seem to be 4 general imperatives in our epistle to the Philippians this morning; to rejoice in God, to be gentle with people, to tell God about things rather than worry alone, and to fill our minds with things that are of God. Much could be said on each of these, but it's the final one – about our thoughts, that struck me the most.

There's a saying 'You are what you eat'; the notion that in order to be fit and healthy, you need to eat good food. I wonder too, if we are to some extent, 'what we think' - that to be spiritually fit and healthy people, we need to fill our thoughts with things that are 'Godly'. This is absolutely *not* in some pious, out of touch, self-righteous way though; but rather as an active way of allowing God the space to filter through deeper into the heart of our being.

There are lines in a favourite hymn of mine which read; 'Be thou my best thought in the day and the night, Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light', which seems to encourage the idea of having our focus 'steeped in God' as it were, both day and night – and way beyond Sunday mornings!

I often think that the monastic life with its rhythm of regular prayer, must be incredibly helpful with this, and the notion of praying without ceasing. I've stayed at a Franciscan Friary many times in the past; the day is punctuated by the Daily Office, bringing our minds' focus back to God throughout the day and evening.

Are there any ways that we can pause and punctuate our busy, full days, with a deliberate re-focussing of our thoughts on God, I wonder?

There are many, many references to thoughts throughout the Bible. A couple of chapters before our Philippians reading, Paul exhorts his readers to 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (Phil 2:5). This seems a big ask, but one aspect might involve trying to see the world through God's eyes; with patience and compassion, with love and hope; seeking God's image in the people we meet, however deeply it may be buried. It will not happen overnight; but is a part of our lifelong journey – our intent, or what we truly aspire to, is what matters. And if it all seems rather an effort, or we're feeling a bit stagnant, there's no shame in asking God for the *desire* to become more Christlike in our ways of thinking and viewing of the world. We cannot achieve this in our own strength, rather by God's grace through prayer.

I wonder - is there someone or something that's always there at the back of our mind? What sort of effect does it have on us? Have we told God about it?

Whatever fills our minds, (deliberately or not) to some extent, will work through into our lives – even subconsciously – in some way, since our actions tend to grow from our thoughts.

I like to end my day, with what St Ignatius called 'the Examen' - reflecting back on the times during the day in which I have sensed God's presence. I find that the more thoroughly I look, the more I find! Deliberately filling my thoughts in this way at the end of each day, helps me stay grateful and gives me glimpses of God's work, that I could easily have missed; I would recommend it!

So may we allow God to increasingly fill our minds and lives with himself, that through us, others may gain a glimpse of him. Amen