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Dear Friends

I recently read a story which I believe has some important things to say to us at this time:

A church in Atlanta was honouring one of its ministers who had been retired many years. He was 92 at that time and I wondered why the church even bothered to ask the old gentleman to preach at that age. After a warm welcome, introduction of this speaker, and as the applause quietened down, he rose from his high back chair and walked slowly, with great effort and a sliding gait to the podium.

Without a note or written paper of any kind he placed both hands on the pulpit to steady himself and then quietly and slowly he began to speak....

"When I was asked to come here today and talk to you, your minister asked me to tell you what was the greatest lesson ever learned in my 50-odd years of preaching. I thought about it for a few days and boiled it down to just one thing that made the most difference in my life and sustained me through all my trials. The one thing that I could always rely on when tears and heartbreak and pain and fear and sorrow paralyzed me... the only thing that would comfort was this verse....

Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong, we are weak but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me.... the Bible tells me so.

He went on to say, "I always noticed that it was the adults who chose the children's hymn 'Jesus Loves Me' (for the children of course) during a hymn sing, and it was the adults who sang the loudest because I could see they knew it the best. Here for you now is a senior version of 'Jesus Loves Me'"

*Jesus loves me, this I know, though my hair is white as snow
Though my sight is growing dim, still He bids me trust in Him.*

*CHORUS: Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,
yes, Jesus loves me, for the Bible tells me so.*

*Though my steps are oh, so slow, with my hand in His I'll go
On through life, let come what may, He'll be there to lead the way.*

*When the nights are dark and long, in my heart He puts a song.
Telling me in words so clear, "Have no fear, for I am near."*

*When my work on earth is done, and life's victories have been won.
He will take me home above, then I'll understand His love.*

*I love Jesus, does He know? Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say, That I love Him every day.*

I love this story because it shows how the message of God's love is relevant to all ages. With the ongoing restrictions it is totally understandable if people get fed up, and struggle. Many are heroically struggling - with home-schooling, missing physical contact with family and friends, feeling isolated The list goes on and you could make your own list I'm sure.

While the vaccine is good news as it gets rolled out, the gospel is even better Good News to lift our hearts and minds, bringing light to the darkness of these times.

'God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' (John 3.16)

I invite you to read that verse again, this time putting your own name in the places where I have left a blank:

'God so loved ----- (your name) that He gave his only Son, that ----- (your name) believing in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

Take a moment now or later to be still, to become aware of God's presence with you. Thank Him for his love for you and for the fact that however you're feeling (great, or not good, or somewhere in between) you are loved of God.

I never get tired of quoting God's words from Isaiah 43.4: **'You are precious to me and honoured in my sight and I love you'**.

Knowing that, it's enough to make you sing 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so' – whatever age you are!

Praying that we all know **'the eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms'** (Deuteronomy 33.27)

God bless

Kip

And finally

- One of our church family, Kathryn Bowman, has asked me to mention Olio, an initiative that ensures that surplus food is shared and used, not thrown away. This has a number of benefits - environmentally as the food is not going into landfill and financially as your shopping bills reduce.

Kathryn writes:

Those of you who are on the church Facebook group may have seen the Olio food collections that Dave and I (and my mum) have been doing recently. If you Google Olio you can learn more about the initiative. To get involved you can message me on Facebook (Kathryn Elizabeth) and I will add you to our Fb message group or you can text me 07817397716 and I will message you when there are collections.

How do I 'save' food? Download the Olio app. I will message when we are doing a collection. Come to our house with your shopping bags - 31 Linkside Rd and pick up what you can use.

How do Olio measure impact? Request food from ourselves or my mum on the app and Olio report back to Tesco the impact - how many people have collected and how many items have been saved.

Where do we 'save' food from? At the moment, it is Tesco and Nisa.

- **REMINDERS**

1) **Coffee and chat** each Sunday 11.30 am on Zoom.

2) **Our monthly prayer meeting** on Zoom Saturday 13th February at 9 am

To receive the links for either of these events please email Julia:

curate@stpeters-woolton.org.uk

- **PLEASE PRAY**

- for all those who are unwell at this time, in hospital or at home and for those caring for them.

- for the families and friends of those who have died recently, especially Olive Oxby, Edith Bond, Pamela Leverton, Eva Parr, Flo Ashton and John McGarvey.