**2 Chr. 7 :1-16 MM O/L**

**King Solomon was happy: everything was going so well! He went home to his palace, we’re told, and everyone went to their homes *joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done (v. 10).* Listen to this:**

**vv. 1-7**

**It reminds me of Manor Mission. No, seriously! When King Solomon finished praying, *fire came down from heaven* *(v. 1). Fire came down from heaven….*doesn’t that remind you of something? Aren’t we in that period of the church year between Easter and….Pentecost? Pentecost: when fire came down from heaven (Ac. 2:3-4). And, the fire, of course, is the Holy Spirit.**

**Aren’t we living in a time when the fire *still* falls from heaven when we pray and even *after* we pray as God goes on answering our prayers? Have we forgotten that? Could it be that we may have started taking the privilege and power of prayer for granted? And look - the priests tried to get *back* into the Temple (cf. 2 Chr. 5:7-11) but they couldn’t because it was filled with God’s glory (v. 2). They couldn’t get enough and tried to get back in! Now, we don’t have to go to a Temple because we *are* the Temple (1 Cor. 3:16)! But perhaps we’ve forgotten what it means to want more and we’re happy with a prayer meeting every once in a while (and I thank God we’ve now *got* a prayer meeting), but perhaps we’ve forgotten to *Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17)*. Perhaps God’s prayer meeting *never* ends….**

**Anyway, the people were moved to worship. The musicians played their instruments and the people sang, *He is good; his love endures forever (v. 3, 6)* and Manor Mission is famous, of course, for its music and singing, thank God.**

**And Solomon made an offering of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. In fact he had to extend the consecrated part of the courtyard in order to accommodate all the offerings (v. 7). Now, he could only do that because God had greatly blessed him in the first place and aren’t *we* thankful for God’s material blessings upon us and the fact that we are able to give back so generously – to the tune of something like £66,000 in the building fund alone? Because we want to extend, too, don’t we? Yes, we are greatly blessed because *He is good; his love endures forever*!**

**But there’s more….**

**vv. 8-10**

**People came from all over – Lebo Hamath was in the north and the wadi of Egypt (v. 8) in the south – we might say, “From Land’s End to John O’Groats”. And aren’t we thankful that we are such a *vast assembly* (sometimes we’re full up!), not just from Laindon, Basildon and Vange, but from all over the world! Yes, God has greatly blessed us because *He is good; his love endures forever*! Let’s sing it again, *He is good; his love endures forever*! How long? *Forever!***

**And they all went home after the service *joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done for* them (v. 10) and don’t we go home joyful and glad because *He is good; his love endures forever*?**

**And, so, at home in his palace, joyful and glad, in the night Solomon had a visitation from God:**

**vv. 11-13**

**In the midst of all his success and prosperity when God’s blessing was evident to Solomon and everyone, God told him, *I have heard your prayer and….When I send a plague among my people….(vv. 12-13).* Did you notice that? *When,* not *if.***

**What? Why would God send a plague? Well, what had they been singing? *He is good; his love endures forever.* For how long? *Forever.* That’s a big claim – how could they know it was true? Well, it’s easy to proclaim God’s love when things are going well, isn’t it? We can even start to take it for granted. We can even start to think of it as an entitlement. “I can hear your songs,” says God, “but do you call Me good *because* I’ve blessed you so much? Will you still call Me good if I *test* you?”**

**Someone asked me recently where the corona virus came from. I don’t know why he asked me – I’m not a virologist! – but I’m *told* that it came from animals and it doesn’t surprise me if our abuse of animals sometimes results in us getting bitten! He also asked me who *made* the virus and, again, I don’t know, but I *do* know that viruses mutate so quickly that it’s no longer the virus that was *made* in the first place. So, whether this *is* one of those plagues that God said He would *send* is uncertain.**

**But that He is testing our response to it is sure. Will we *still* sing of His enduring love if we’re locked up at home and can’t get to *our* Tabernacle to worship? Will we *still* sing of His enduring love if it’s a time of plague and death? Will we *still* sing of His enduring love if there’s an economic collapse and our building fund devalues rapidly?**

**Many won’t, that’s for sure. But what about God’s *people, who are called by [His] name*? Because He goes on to say,**

**vv. 14-16**

**To Solomon, God’s *people, who are called by [His] name* meant *Isra-el* – the -*el* part being one of God’s names. We’re not Israel, but we do also bear His name:aren’t we *Christ-*ians, those belonging to Christ?**

**So what are we to do? Well, I guess, first accept that He’s *allowed* this plague even if He didn’t *send* it. Then:**

* **Humble ourselves (could there be a suggestion there that we’ve become proud of ourselves instead, you know, self-satisfied?); then**
* **Pray (perhaps praying like we’ve never prayed before); and**
* **Seek His face (could it be that we’ve been distracted by other faces or forms?);**
* **And turn from our wicked ways (could it be that God knows our secrets?).**

**So don’t expect Boris Johnson to save us, but please include him in your prayers; don’t expect the World Health Organisation to save us, but please pray for those working on a cure; and don’t expect your neighbours to do all these things; it’s *our* job – those *called by [His] name.***

**And what will God do? Well, when He sees that we really *mean* all those lovely songs we sing; when everything is stripped away except what *really* matters, then, according to 2 Chronicles 7 v. 14, He will forgive *our* sin and heal our land.**

**We are not helpless. We have much to do. For some of us that includes healing the sick and serving the needy. But, for all of us, even those locked in at home, remember, we are His Temple and His *eyes and [His] heart will always be there (v. 16).* Let’s use wisely this time that He’s given us locked in with Him.**