November 2026 Being Prepared

As I look around the vicarage garden, it is full of preparation for difficult times ahead. Trees dropping their leaves, squirrels burying food, many plants dying back and, as our wildlife camera shows us nightly, at least three hedgehogs urgently feeding up before hibernation. The natural world is preparing to survive the rigours of winter. And on our news not long ago, we have had government advice urging us to prepare for potential hardships caused by cyber attacks or the climate emergency.

Scientists and politicians seem to speak of two strands of preparing for the impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises. Politicians seem to focus on how we might be able to 'become more resilient' to some of the effects. While for at least four decades, scientists have been urging us to take steps to reduce the risks by lowering the emissions that are causing global warming, as their research shows consistently that the consequences of 'life as usual' are potentially unsurvivable. Yet although most of us know we need to make changes, many of us struggle to do so.

Historically Christianity has taught many, and conflicting, views about being prepared for what the future may bring. Bible passages such as Jesus' words about 'do not worry about what you will eat or what you will wear' (Matthew chapter 6, verses 25ff) have been used to justify a 'God will take care of it all' attitude which negates human responsibility. Some strands of spirituality foster an attitude of 'just appreciate the present moment,' which can be used to promote a similar disregard for the impact our actions have on others. Yet throughout Christian history, running through all of Christian teaching has remained Jesus' key commandment to 'love our neighbours as ourselves,' together with parables such as the Good Samaritan, teaching us that however broad our concept of 'neighbour' is, God calls on us to broaden it further.

Whether or not we include our non-human neighbours in our personal definition of 'neighbour,' all the major Christian aid agencies and charities identify the climate emergency as a major cause of poverty world-wide, currently undoing decades of progress to improve the lives of the world's poorest people. For me, all of these statistics are important, but what is far more important is that I believe our call to love our neighbour means, in essence, seeking to live kindly, and only taking what we need, or what we can take without causing harm to any.

So for me the big steps are important; looking at what I eat, reducing my energy use, changing my energy supplier, looking carefully at how I use my money. But for me the little steps are important too: ensuring all left over food is eaten not thrown away, trying not to buy things I don't need, wearing clothes and using appliances until they wear out, crushing tins and cutting plastic rings to ensure they don't harm wildlife, moving snails and slugs off paths so they don't get trodden on, and so on. My guiding principle, which grows out of my Christian faith, is to seek to try to live kindly and to tread lightly through this life.

My prayer for us all this month is very simple; it is that we would all seek to do more good, and seek to avoid doing harm.

Yours in Christ,
Louise Petheram
rev.louise.p@gmail.com 01433 621918

If you would like to sign up to receive the regular newsletters from churches and Christian groups across Hope Valley, please go to
https://mailchi.mp/f29b1286b3df/2t1gk3uwy2
or email me and I can sign you up.