

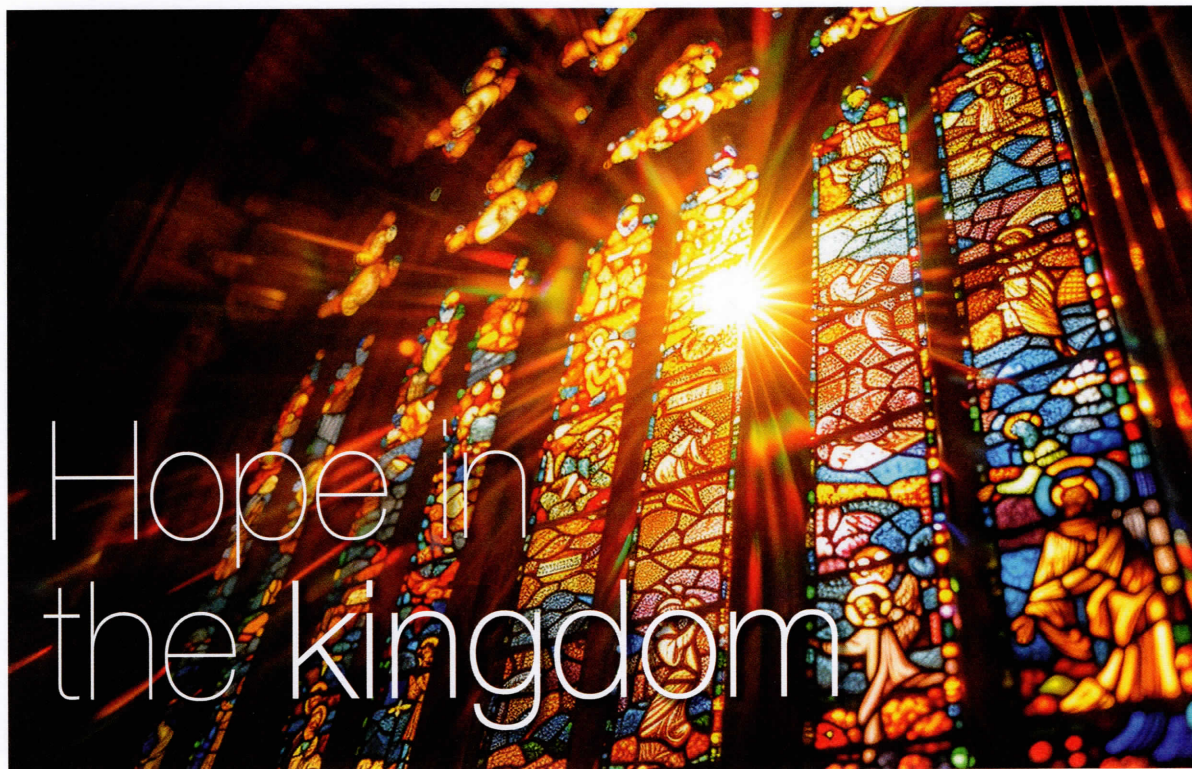
Gillian Cooper

reflects on Luke 21:5-19

It seems the disciples are a bit over-confident about the durability of the Temple. As visitors from Galilee, they marvel at the building's size and beauty. They are impressed by the dedication to the God of Israel that it represents, believing that God will honour it by being present there for ever. But Jesus warns them that the Temple is not as durable as it appears. He speaks of destruction and disaster to come, not only in Jerusalem but throughout the known world. Even more frighteningly, he speaks of persecution and betrayal aimed especially at those who maintain allegiance to him.

But there is good news. There is no use in relying on the physical presence of the Temple, Jesus says. But that does not mean that Jesus' followers are without resources, or that they should despair. He promises them wisdom, so that they will know who to believe and what to say. They can endure, he says, because the kingdom of God is near. God's presence with the people does not depend on the existence of the Temple. God's kingdom does not require an earthly throne, but is an ever-present reality.

Jesus has a harsh but realistic message for his disciples. There are times when we might find the state of the world overwhelming. Everywhere we look there are warnings of impending doom and catastrophe – be it environmental, political, or economic. But like the disciples we have a choice – to despair of the world or to hope in the kingdom. ☺



Hope in the kingdom

Lord Jesus, in times of doubt, despair and when I feel overwhelmed, remind me that I have the choice to hope in the kingdom. Amen.

World toilet day

by Lee Tulfer

November 19 is World Toilet Day. It might be an unpalatable subject, but it's hugely important for anyone concerned about social justice throughout God's creation.

The United Nations declared access to sanitation and water a human right in 2010, and "safe toilets for all by 2030" is one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6 – but the world is seriously off track. 3.5 billion people still live without safely managed sanitation.

Lack of safe toilets has huge implications for human health, spreading diseases such as cholera and dysentery, while untreated sewage threatens to contaminate the environment and food chain. One fifth of schools worldwide have no toilet facilities, which can prevent girls attending once they start menstruating. And women with no choice but to "go" in the open, especially after dark, are vulnerable to attack.

So on Wednesday, why not pray about what you can do to help? You can find out more at: www.un.org/en/observances/toilet-day ☺

The creeds

by Kathryn Fleming

If human understanding of God is at best limited, should we say the creeds at all? "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," said Wittgenstein, and it seems a cheek to attempt to codify the attributes of God. I'd imagine most of us sometimes struggle to honestly profess each clause, and that we all have days when it seems best to gloss over the complexities of the virgin birth

or bodily resurrection. It's a relief, then, that the Nicene Creed is explicitly corporate – "we believe" allows for individual uncertainty to be carried in a majority conviction that includes not simply those present, but the wider Church, too.

Even so, it might be wiser to pare down the creeds to a minimalist alternative, like this from David Jenkins: "God is. He is for us, and therefore there is hope. God is. He is as he is in Jesus, and therefore it is worth it."

I'm pretty sure I can sign up to that, even on a bad day. ☺

“How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of
your wings.”

Psalms 36:7