

Richard Dormandy *reflects on* Isaiah 55:1-9

I'm a sucker for a bargain. Special offers make me feel good, although handouts are another matter. The way I was brought up, you didn't claim something just because you were entitled, but because you were in need.

God gave Isaiah some strange lyrics: "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." It's not a handout, because the language speaks of the marketplace. The customer retains their autonomy and dignity.

Yet there's also a sense of need: "everyone who thirsts, come to the waters". The song continues with a classic salesman's urgency: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near."

What are we being offered here is an "everlasting covenant" – a relationship with God. The stallholder refers to David, who will witness to the peoples and call the nations. What is this David like? In the visions of Revelation, St John looks for the Davidic Lion yet

sees a Lamb. Our David – Jesus – witnesses to God's everlasting love through the self-sacrificial cross.

There are so many things on offer, but Isaiah the salesman says, "Why be content with fakes or substandard goods when you can

have the real thing? Don't go to the pound shop for a knock-off when you can have the real thing."

Yet there has to be a cost somewhere, surely? And there is. This relationship is free to us because it cost Christ everything. 🍷



Heavenly Father, this Lent help me to accept the love of Jesus, freely given, and live out his self-giving love. Amen.

Words from the cross, part 3

A series for Lent

by Caroline Fletcher

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' John 19:26-27a

How her heart must have broken, witnessing the death of her son. She stood by through his hours of agony, hearing the crowd laughing as he suffered. She must have been desperate to stop it, but powerless to do so.

Mary's other sons were not beside her on this terrible day. The Bible suggests that they were embarrassed by Jesus. So Christ rejected convention and entrusted her care to his beloved disciple. This gives us a clue as to how he saw the Church – a family where people care for each other as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Mary must have needed real ongoing support after the trauma and Jesus expected his disciple to deliver that.

May God help the Church to be this kind of family. 🍷

“The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of that road are saints looking up into the face of God. This leaf has its own texture and its own pattern of veins and its own holy shape... The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and the sea too is a saint who praises God without interruption in her majestic dance.”

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), American Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet and social activist

International Day of Happiness

by Caroline Hodgson

All the United Nations member states have adopted a resolution calling for happiness to be given greater priority, and since 2013 20 March has been designated as International Day of Happiness. The website says: "A profound shift in attitudes is underway all over the world. People are now recognising that 'progress' should be about increasing human happiness and wellbeing, not just growing the economy." In 2011 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising

happiness as a "fundamental human goal".

It might seem rather obvious to point out that Jesus' ministry was all about happiness and wellbeing. He healed those who were sick, both in body or spirit. He recognised people – even those who were marginalised. He looked directly at them, addressed them as equals, and accorded them the dignity of their humanity. Over two thousand years before the UN's resolution, Jesus knew very well that happiness is a "fundamental human goal", and lived this out in word and deed.

www.dayofhappiness.net 🍷