**Philippians 4 – Sun 11 October. Trinity 18 2020**

Do you know any “quick fix” Christians? You know – the people who can pluck a Bible verse out of thin air for every eventuality? I think today’s passage from Philippians would be one in their file for anyone who is anxious or worried. We all worry sometimes, feel anxious, have a sleepless night occasionally. And that’s usually related to a specific situation or decision or relationship.

However, there are also people for whom anxiety is a much longer-term issue, who need help and support. The pandemic has seen rising numbers of people being treated for anxiety, and with the end point still very unclear, those numbers are likely to increase further. Having known a number of people struggling with anxiety, I know quoting Philippians 4:6 would not be helpful as a quick fix.

So what does it mean, and how can it help?

Quick intro to Philippians:

* Philippi – North East Greece
* Named after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great
* Made a colony after forces loyal to the recently assassinated Julius Caesar under Mark Anthony defeated forces loyal to Brutus
* Colony: not like European colonies
* All the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship (e.g. Paul uses his privileges in Acts)

So a key theme of the book is humility – the humility of Jesus at the start of chapter 2, Paul discounting all that he could cite as giving him status as loss (3:7 – literally “dung”) and reminding them that what mattered was their “citizenship is in heaven” (3:20)

And it’s in that context that Paul says “therefore”. What is it there for?

The key word is peace. verses 7 & 9. Not just a calm feeling by a lake, up a mountain or in the countryside. The idea of peace often comes across “like a marshmallow: soft and sweet, but insubstantial” (Motyer).

Paul – Jewish notion of *shalom* – a strong idea which is about harmony with God, others and oneself. This peace is not just an internal, personal experience. God has made peace with us. Remember the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples? His first words after all the trauma of the crucifixion and astonishing event of the resurrection? “Peace be with you” – and he didn’t just mean “calm down, lads”, but that real peace had come.

Hence relationships are addressed by Paul in v 2, and contentment after the section we had read today. Here we see Paul teaching that we should have confidence in bringing requests to God, rejoice in what we have, and a have lack of hostility to other people.

Addressing anxiety is a lifelong process, and there is no quick fix, and it has to be addressed on many fronts at once. However, we all need peace somewhere in our lives – the strong *shalom* peace that Paul had in mind – and that starts with the peace that God has made with us.