

Last year in the cold of November I met a woman who did not have enough money to take a hot shower. When you are poor you buy your energy prepaying as you go, watching your meter run down on your smart phone shower by shower of hot water. There is no credit. You see, she was saving enough hot water so that she could wash her grandchildren's school uniform and her daughter's work clothes over the weekend, if she used all the money she had her family could have clean clothes on Monday. that was all the money she had left. The end of the month was a week away and she had no idea how she was going to do laundry the following week. She looked tired and in need of a hot shower. £15 was all she needed to solve her problem. An impossible £15.

This woman only lives a kilometer from where we are sitting this morning. And this woman is not unique in her situation here in Farnham.

I can barely read the latest news in Russia and Ukraine. Now a nuclear plant is involve in the shelling. If I open the door in my mind to the possibility of what could happen next, I could get lost.

Yesterday I read that The source of the thames has dried up for the first time and moved 5 miles downstream. My son and many other young men and women do not see the point of ever having children. They don't believe human life on earth will last long enough for their children to reach maturity. Maybe you suffered from similar concerns when you were 20 something. I know I did, and yet the reality seems more serious now.

The thing is I've been on holiday with millions of others, travelling on plains, trains, cars, busses, boats while our earthly governments seem to be paying only lip service to our climate crisis. We all seem to be asleep.

How do we read the signs of our own times?

How do we read the signs of our times when We live in this beautiful bubble often two or three times removed from the struggles of humanity?

How can we read the signs of our times without being overwhelmed with the enormity of the hurt and suffering in the world?

How can we even have the courage to read the signs of our times, if it means that when we see clearly what is happening it will put us at odds with so many. Here is our dilemma. Jesus Christ does not rule our government or our markets or our culture or our workplace – even the church gets distracted by human desire. Jesus Christ is often not recognised by the powerful and the privileged, yet he is the way the truth and the life and he calls us specifically to speak truth to power precisely because we are a people who have voices and know how to be heard.

He often doesn't rule our families, our social activities and doesn't always rule our own purse strings or decision making. And yet if he rules our heart our actions and desires, we will be in opposition to many of our institutions and the people around us in some way because following Jesus is different from following man and it is different than following our own desire for pleasure or our need for safety that keeps us in our bubble.

What does Jesus want from you, from me? To follow him, to seek his heart in all we do, to be clear about who we are following. It is not that Christ came to create division,

he came to create men and women after his own heart because he loves us. The division comes from the different values that creep into our lives when we think we are following the good, but not following God

Of course I gave the lovely woman who needed hot water £15. Actually we all did, Our parish had a fund to help in these situations. Our giving made this possible, it makes us part of the story. The light on her face was a privilege to witness, but the greatest transformation took place in me. The personal and basic sacrifices she was making every day for her family, I see this over and over again in our poor. It shames me, and I see Jesus's face.

Katarina, Ludmilla, Natalia, Victoria, Miro, Nicki and other Ukrainian refugees have found places of refuge and love among us. Their stories change us, the lived experiences of those hosting refugees are opening us up to the world.

The worry of my generation as children was the threat of nuclear war with the USSR and the destruction of the planet. I too worried that having children was a selfish thing to do in such times, but having children has given me a stake in the future, has given me a passion to make

our world a better place; I believe it will be so with our own children and grandchildren.

I did not open with stories of doom and gloom so that we can ring our hands and commiserate. We have a God who is stronger than Climate change, war and poverty. We have a God who wishes to partner with us by giving us the privilege to be part of the solution. As we allow ourselves to be put at risk of being overwhelmed by the difficult stories in our midst, as we open our defenses, we are being transformed. God is breaking down the barriers between us, opening us in vulnerability, bursting the bubble of The Bourne and leading us into acts of love by his spirit.

How can we read the signs of the times here in The Bourne? I'll tell you. Our powerful God of love is on the move right here and right now, calling us into action. How will we respond this week?