‘Making space for hope’

When John F Kennedy became president of the United States, he set himself the task of putting a man on the moon by the end of the 1960’s. What an ambition! They thought it was impossible, ‘You must be mad’, they said. Well people set about the task with a will. The story goes that in 1962 the President went to see the national space agency (NASA) on a visit, and was introduced to a man whose job was sweeping the floor and being a cleaner. And the president asked the cleaner: 'What do you do here? And the man said: 'I'm helping to put a man on the moon.’ Wow! He’d obviously been caught up in a great vision and his part in it.

On your way in this morning, you may have been given a wristband. I don’t know whether you have ever worn a wristband in the past. I haven’t. They are of course more popular with our children and grandchildren’s generation. You know the sort of thing they wear. Make Poverty History. WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?

Take a look at our wrist band if you will. I hope you like it. There is the cathedral colour red. There is the cathedral lettering or font. The cross of nails, our logo, is in the middle. And let me thank the sub-dean for master-minding the production of this so brilliantly. And then there is the message. Quite simply describing what we’re about –

Making Space for Hope.

I don’t know whether that phrase impresses you as much as it impresses me – I love it, by the way, I really do! - but making space for hope sums up our collective purpose as a cathedral, in our worship allowing heart and mind to be lifted up and transformed in the presence of the living God……. It sums up our purpose as a place of reconciliation here and throughout the world……

And it sums up our own vocation as individuals. Let’s take a moment to see how it might apply to ourselves as individuals.

I look at the wristband and I ask myself a question: where is God calling me to be making space for hope? What does this imaginative and visionary phrase mean for me? In fact, where does God want any of us to be making a space for hope? It’s a truly personal question about the dimension of hope in our own situations – about the space for hope inside ourselves.

Let’s see what help we can get from the sacred scriptures set for us this morning. What clue might the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain give us? What might the unsurpassable language of St Paul have to say to us about the God who said ‘let light shine out of darkness’ and whose glory ‘shines….in the face of Jesus Christ’?

Well my immediate answer is to wonder if God wants us to be making space for hope in our hearts – to wonder if God is inviting us to let him join that community of people whom we treasure in our hearts. And not just God the Father, or God the Spirit, but Jesus whom we are invited to get to know as one of us.
It is as if we are being asked to invite Jesus to become a really important part of the community of our heart, that assortment of people who make up the closest and most intimate fabric of our life and make it what it is: the people we are close to — children, partners, parents, close friends, people we’ve lost and remember fondly, or that we have regrets about or resentments or anger, as well as the community of people we adore and can’t live without.

God’s personal invitation to us to be making space for hope may be asking us to allow the founder of our faith, Jesus the Son of God, to be joining our closest community — our inner circle. God may be asking us to let the Jesus who is transfigured in his life, and radiant with glory, and radiantly transfigured in his resurrection — to be transforming our life with his transforming experience.

The thought may be that the transforming presence of Jesus in our daily lives will bring about changes in relationships too — rather as John V Taylor implied when he described the Holy Spirit as the Go-between God — the Spirit going between people and situations to transform and remake them.

We are the centre of our own world undoubtedly, but to invite Jesus to make space for hope inside our human hearts is to move his world to the centre of ours. It is perhaps what being a Christian really means — moving Jesus to the centre of our world and taking note of what he says. Jesus is the hope we are making space for.

It takes no great imagination to expand the idea out and beyond our own selves to the wider world of our community, of this Cathedral, and its reconciliation ministry, in which making space for hope in front and behind and around people and situations is the very thing that is needed if voices are to be heard and hurts healed.

I hope you will wear your wrist band, or hand it on to someone else. Give it as a gift. Wear it as a badge and a marker of our shared commitment. Imagine being asked what you’re doing here. ‘I’m making space for hope’. For hope is what we need when the going is tough, space is what we need when we feel hemmed in on every side, hope is what we need as we engage on the great enterprise of a journey together — the belief that in the end ‘light shines in the darkness’, the light of the transfigured Jesus.

‘Christ in us – the hope of glory’.

AMEN