



Today our country has been bracing and preparing for the approach and onslaught of Cyclone Cook, coming down to us from the tropics. Perhaps we have been keeping an eye on the news and the weather, especially if we have family and friends up north, or travelling this weekend.

Here we know all about preparing for and living through times of disaster and challenge, and the wonderful way in which people step up to help and support one another, just as we've seen in recent days up in Edgecumbe, and in North Canterbury and Marlborough over recent months since their quakes.

But perhaps we couldn't ever have been prepared for what the long months and years of recovery of our city would involve, over 6^{1/2} years now, and the toll that would take on us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Recently at a seminar for clergy on wellbeing in post-quake Christchurch, we received a card from the Mental Health Foundation, suggesting ways to wellbeing, applicable to all people but especially for those living in situations of crisis or recovery.

I just want to focus on 2 words, 2 actions that are suggested.

The first word encourages us to **CONNECT** to other people: not to isolate ourselves, but to take time to talk with and listen to others, our family, neighbours, friends, to be there for them and so to feel connected ourselves with others in our community, we are all in this together, we need each other, we can support each other.

The second word is to **GIVE**: to reach out to others in whatever way is right for us, whether it is very practical in terms of giving something to help another, or giving the gift of something of ourselves: our time, our words, our presence, our listening ear.

As I reflected on Jesus approaching his own particular storm or cyclone, if you like, on this Thursday night, he does both these things.

He **CONNECTS** deeply with those he loves, his friends who have become like his family to him, his community of love. Jesus shares a meal with them, a meal with deep resonances with his people's forebears, celebrating God's bringing them out of slavery into freedom centuries before.

And Jesus deepens this connection by **GIVING** – he gives to his friends the gift of a holy meal by which to remember him, and he gives to us the greatest gift of all - the bread and wine shared will become for us his body and blood, broken and shed for us on the cross.

Jesus gives us too the gift of his servanthood, that he comes as a King yes, but not to be served, rather to serve and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mt 20:28)

Tomorrow we will hear the account of the Passion from John's gospel, and recall how Jesus absorbed into himself all that humanity in its inhumanity could throw at him: lies and mocking, betrayal and denial, abuse and violence, all absorbed in one great act of self-**GIVING** and sacrifice.

As we come tonight, and remember the flaws and failures of Jesus' disciples that first Thursday night just when he needed them most, perhaps we too become very aware of our own flaws and failings in our discipleship. We are humbled in the face of Jesus' selfless self-giving love, and yet too that is where we find our grounding, at ground level, perhaps in the extremis of our own 'ground zero', whatever that is for us, *there* we find Christ kneeling at our feet, offering to wash our dirty feet, to wash us clean and restore us.

Probably none of us as we look at our feet tonight thinks that they are perfect, perhaps our feet are rather worn out, with all sorts of strange bumps and lumps and rough bits. Perhaps we have been a bit busy lately to cut our toenails, our feet are not all 'tidied up'. We are probably quite like Peter, wanting to protest, "Lord, you will never wash my feet!"

But perhaps it is as we allow our feet to be washed by someone else tonight, that we know that awesome gift that God loves us and accepts us just as we are, that God in Christ kneels at our feet and serves us, connects with us and gives to us the gift of love.

So do come and receive the blessing and ministry of having your feet washed this evening. Come just as you are, and just when you are ready. Amen.