

The Corona Chronicle

West Worthing Evangelical Church Rugby Road.

Sunday July 19th.

www.westworthingevangelical.co.uk

Being Church while the Corona Virus emergency is on

Keeping Up Appearances



Hyacinth Bucket (or, as she would emphatically insist, Bouquet) burst upon our television screens in 1990 in a highly successful comedy series which was to run for five years, including four Christmas specials. Dominating her loving but long-suffering husband, she was the archetypal social climbing snob who terrorized the neighbourhood.

Out to impress those around her and to cultivate relationships with those whom she regarded as belonging to the upper classes – remember her “executive style” candlelit dinners - she found herself in situations which quickly spiralled out of her control and ended in social disaster.

Desperately trying to deny her true situation she sought to project an image which was just not true. Brilliantly brought to life by Patricia Routledge, as a comedic character Hyacinth was hilarious. As a real live person she would be pathetic, in the true sense of the word.

And yet there may be more Hyacinth Bucketism around than we like to admit.

Our world worships success in whatever realm you enter and consequently the pressure is on to project the image of confidence, assurance and total capability. If you have ever watched an episode of *The Apprentice* (and I really don't recommend it!) you will have had the excruciating experience of hearing these young, wannabee executives extolling their own virtues to Lord Sugar in order to avoid hearing the dreaded words, “You're fired!”.

Their performance, however, often shows how the reality differs from the image.

Keeping up appearances is not restricted to our secular society; the church itself can be infected. It happened even in New Testament times – look at the church in Corinth. Set in a successful, sophisticated city where image rather than substance was the keyword the young church swallowed it hook, line and sinker.

Image was all – until the Apostle Paul lanced the spiritual boil and showed them the hollowness of their “success” and the evils they tolerated.

Today, I confess I find it hard to sing some of the triumphalist Christian songs because they seem to deny the reality of what is actually happening on the ground and the general state of the church.

Is my reaction due to my lack of faith and vision? Or is it because we are afraid to be realistic, to admit we can't fix things? Yet isn't this the way to real progress, to encourage us to turn from our reliance upon the ersatz power of our organizing and activity and to seek God's power more earnestly?

But what about ourselves? Sometimes churches hold an image of their pastors and leaders as omni-competent and super-spiritual; foolish the man who tries to keep this image intact! That can end in disaster for all.

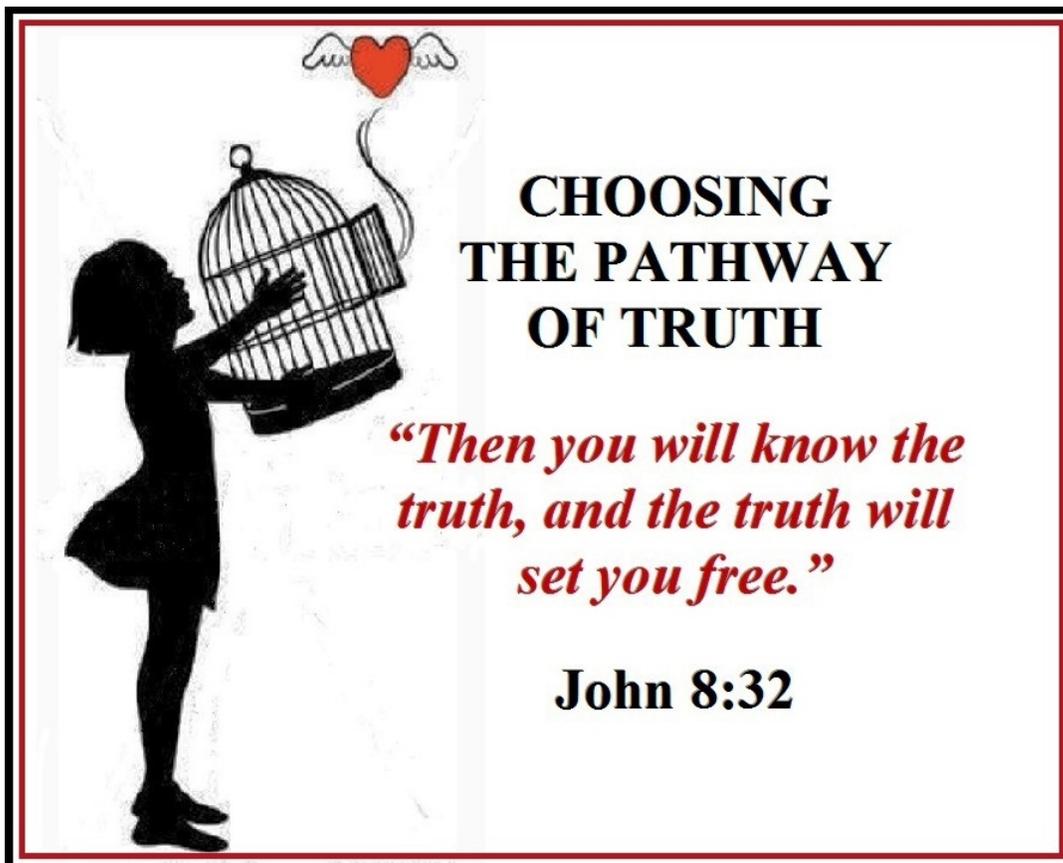
On the other hand, church members can also project a false image. As a minister walked up the path to the home of two of his members he could hear the furious row going on inside the house. He rang the bell and immediately silence fell. After a pause the door opened and the smiling faces of the husband and wife confronted him. "Pastor, how lovely to see you; do come in!" Is that image or not?

Why do we do this? Sometimes it can be sheer ego massaging on our part. We want to be liked, respected, to make an impression, to be regarded as really spiritually mature. That's what the Bible calls pride.

But there is another more pervasive reason. Over two decades ago John Powell, a Jesuit priest, wrote a book entitled "Why am I afraid to tell you who I am?". The basic answer was "Because that's all I have and I'm afraid that you won't like it". The book was an attempt to help people be more honest and open in their relationships.

Behind our facades we are all vulnerable and fragile people and often behind the most assured exterior there lurks a basic uncertainty. Jesus said "The truth will make you free" (John 8:32) and we need to realize or recapture that God our Father knows every aspect, hang-up and weakness in us and loves us anyway and is in the process of ironing out all the quirks and faults to make us perfect and flawless in eternity. In the meantime he has put us into a family of redeemed but still imperfect people to live honestly before him and one another, understanding and making allowances for and accepting and loving each other. And sometimes that's costly.

Dennis R. Read



Name: _____

Date: _____

BIBLE BOOKS WORD SEARCH

OLD TESTAMENT



Y U K Z E C H A R I A H T R E D S J A D E Q
Z C F W H O X V S S P H U D U S H P N L Z G
C C Z E C C L E S I A S T E S T T G O L E S
D A N I E L W O F S L J P U I V H H Y L K T
A H A B A K K U K G L H S T R J J M E G I Q
Q W O R A G E N E S I S A E K O O O M R E D
H C P R O V E R B S B O L R I B N E A L L Y
A H G E J U D G E S D Z M O N A A H L A H Z
G R S O N G O F S O N G S N G D H O A M L N
G O J L A M O D Q K P C A O S I Z S C E E E
A N Z E P H A N I A H U D M J A W E H N D H
I I T V R U A G P D P C H Y K H V A I T N E
P C R I Y E M M P F B I S A I A H C S A U M
H L C T Z C M I O L E O J O S H U A A T M I
C E H I G B A I C S Q Z G D N A H U M I B A
J S U C J B W E A A X T R H S C Z K U O E H
O I S U V B D C N H H N I A E U U O E N R M
B A R S K X D E X O D U S P E D F G L S S V

ZECHARIAH
ISAIAH
OBADIAH
EZEKIEL
DEUTERONOMY
RUTH
JONAH
GENESIS
HAGGAI

JUDGES
LAMENTATIONS
NEHEMIAH
HOSEA
JOSHUA
PSALMS
EXODUS
AMOS
EZRA

NAHUM
MALACHI
JOEL
ECCLESIASTES
DANIEL
SAMUEL
JOB
SONG OF SONGS
PROVERBS

ESTHER
ZEPHANIAH
KINGS
NUMBERS
JEREMIAH
MICAH
CHRONICLES
LEVITICUS
HABAKKUK

Hymns Prayers and Bible Readings.

Prayer of Continual Repentance

O God of Grace,
You have imputed my sin to my substitute, and have imputed His righteousness to my soul, clothing me with a bridegroom's robe, decking me with jewels of holiness. But in my Christian walk I am still in rags; my best prayers are stained with sin; my penitential tears are so much impurity; my confessions of wrong are so many aggravations of sin; my receiving the Spirit is tintured with selfishness.

I need to repent of my repentance; I need my tears to be washed; I have no robe to bring to cover my sins, no loom to weave my own righteousness; I am always standing clothed in filthy garments, and by grace am always receiving change of raiment, for You always justify the ungodly; I am always going into the far country, and always returning home as a prodigal, always saying, "Father, forgive me," and You are always bringing forth the best robe.

Every morning let me wear it, every evening return in it, go out to the day's work in it, be married in it, be wound in death in it, stand before the great white throne in it, enter heaven in it shining as the sun.

Grant me never to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exceeding righteousness of salvation, the exceeding glory of Christ, the exceeding beauty of holiness, the exceeding wonder of grace.

"Continual Repentance," in The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, ed. Arthur Bennett (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust), 136-137.

Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 3v3-11 NKJV

Comfort in Suffering

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.
6 Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.
7 And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

Delivered from Suffering

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,
11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

All comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in Him. He speaks peace to souls by granting the free remission of sins; and He comforts them by the enlivening influences of the Holy Spirit, and by the rich mercies of His grace. He is able to bind up the broken-hearted, to heal the most painful wounds, and also to give hope and joy under the heaviest sorrows. The favours God bestows on us, are not only to make us cheerful, but also that we may be useful to others. He sends comforts enough to support such as simply trust in and serve Him. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust God, who can bring back even from death. Their hope and trust were not in vain; nor shall any be ashamed who trust in the Lord. Past experiences encourage faith and hope, and lay us under obligation to trust in God for time to come. And it is our duty, not only to help one another with prayer, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received. Thus both trials and mercies will end in good to ourselves and others. Matthew Henry