

In conclusion we
. love the words of
Ephesians 3 v 14-21 (NLT)

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen

We hope that you have enjoyed your time with us today, we meet here every Sunday at 10:30am please do come and visit us again.

For More information about the Crown Church please contact Martin White on 0121 681 1690 or visit our web site at <http://www.thecrown.org.uk/>



Sunday 20th June 2010



Janine and Paul's
testimony of walking in

God's light whilst under Cancer's Shadow

Job lived on another 140 years, living to see his children and grandchildren—four generations of them! Then he died—an old man, a full life..

Today we've shared our story about the storms of life. Here's a story Jesus told -

Matthew chapter 7v24-27 (NIV)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

For us also we have been encouraged by the story of Jesus healing of Lazarus in **John 11**

especially verse 4

When he heard this, Jesus said,

"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

For us also the word's of Psalm 23 sung in a modern version have been very precious as we trust God with our future.

As you listen to our story we will be looking at the following passages from the Bible.

This verse in reminds us that we all face hard times just like Jesus.

1 Peter 4 v12 and 13 (the message)

Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the middle of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner.

The following was a big encouragement for Janine

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Philippians Chapter 4 verses 6&7 (the message)

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life

In the Old Testament; the book of Job is a story about a man who had more than his fare share of problems.

We can too often concentrate on his troubles but there is more to the story than that and we see that from the end of his story in **Job 42 verse 17.**

**THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.**

And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Crown Church 20th June 2010

It's really quite difficult to decide where to start as we come to share with you this morning as this is as much the story of our journey with God as it is a sermon as such.

I believe we need to be real with each other as we share our blessings, our successes, our failures as well as our hard times

So I'm going to start by re-winding around 15 years to 1995 to the last time I stood up and preached in church. I was by then almost 40 years old, I had been a Christian for over 20 years, I had been married for 18 years and life seemed to be going along OK. There were issues to be faced by mostly life ticked along quite well, we were well on the way to paying off the mortgage on our house in Selborne Road and I had dreams of retiring by the time I was 50. I ran my own computer business, we had a 10 year old son and a gorgeous black and white border collie called Lucy.

The topic God me for that day was that of Suffering and what should our attitude be when as Christians we come face to face with difficult times. As our story unfolds you will hopefully understand why I come with just a little anxiety as we share with you this morning.

So why this subject – many reasons the biggest being that I truly believe that we as a church need to be prepared for suffering, to be able to walk through it rather than avoid it BUT to know that when we are in the midst of it all GOD is with us, right beside us and indeed sometimes he just picks us up and carries us through it.

I found the following words from 1 Peter 4 v12 to 13 taken from the message bible very helpful -

Friends, when life gets really difficult, do not jump to the conclusion that God is not on the job. Instead, be glad that

you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner.

So what has happened in those intervening years – well I have to say LOTS. Some of it is very sad – some painful – so you will have to excuse me if it gets a little emotional at times but that is the reality of the path I have trodden.

It was around 1995 that I started to realise all was not well in my marriage, work had caused me to be away from home much of the time but in the end the truth was it became easier to be away than at home. My ex-wife and I spent two whole years in counselling with our church leader trying to find a solution but it was not to be! And so we ended up separating after 20 years of marriage.

I continued to attend church but really struggled with being sure that God loved me or that anyone else loved me. I look back and know now that many people were praying for me at that time. Many took me in and cared for me on some of the blackest of days. I had prayed and fasted and begged God to save my marriage but it all had come to nothing.

Eventually, the inevitable happened and I got divorced. I got to a place where I truly felt and believed that no-one loved me that I was un-loveable. God was distant and I found going to church very painful as each time God would touch all the area's that hurt and I would be unable to contain my emotions.

But brothers and sisters who did love me prayed and cared probably more than I will ever know.

I eventually got to a point of realising that although my ex-wife had rejected me and no longer loved me it really was

not all my fault. So as people prayed I slowly started to believe that I was not the worst person in the world. Little by little God drew me back towards a closer walk with himself. As they say time passes and now we need to meet another important part of my life that again caused massive change – Janine.

For most of my adult life I did not recognise God, I figured too much awful stuff had happened. I'd had two failed marriages and 5 daughters.

The first marriage ended in a very messy divorce with me losing custody of my first daughter, this was followed by the death of my second daughter.

My second marriage ended with me taking my 3 youngest girls to a place where we could be safe 200 miles away from my abusive alcoholic husband.

I had built an emotional castle with double thick walls around myself and the girls, pulled up the drawbridge and then put a very deep moat around that – no one was ever getting near me or the girls again. BUT GOD HAD OTHER IDEAS.

Paul and I first met in 2001 at a railway station, now it was not exactly love at first sight but I somehow knew that I would spend the rest of my life with this man. There just was something very different about him; he simply walked through my emotional brick wall bringing God with him. Over the next few months we really gelled and got closer, the girls loved Paul right from the start, life was good but Paul was having to spend a lot of time travelling up and down the country between work, us and his son. Within a year we decided that the girls and I should move to Birmingham. Paul's ex-wife was selling their former home

and it seemed the most natural thing in the world that we should buy it.

Paul's son didn't wish to move from Birmingham with his mother so stayed put - and without any effort and he very naturally stepped into the shoes of big brother to my girls. Paul and I got married and got on with life as one big happy family.

But it has not all been easy – like many families we would face a number of challenges over the years ahead.

Shortly after we moved Paul's long standing work contract came to an end and Paul was unemployed for 18 months causing many challenges with money. At the same time Blecker Hall needed a new roof and a new boiler.

And then in 2004 we joined the Crown Church.

Then came the deaths of two of the most influential women in my life, my step mother of over 30 years died very suddenly devastating the whole family. Only a few weeks later my favourite aunt was to lose her 3 year long battle against bowel cancer. Paul's Mom also died after a long life full of illness.

Last year brought us so much joy. We succeeded in moving my still very active 80 year old mother to Birmingham, which freed me of the worry of her future care.

As a family we took up the challenge of our first camping trip by going along to the Shuttleworth weekend and we had the pleasure of hosting The Crown at Blecker Hall during August - it was all so special.

My eldest daughter was getting married so the wedding planning started in earnest – I was to be the dressmaker for the 5 bridesmaids! It was a manic and joyous summer. It was a really happy family time. My daughter's wedding day was simply the best – words just cannot describe how I felt – finally I was seeing my baby girl all grown up and married.

We returned from the wedding on a complete high but exhausted. I had been running on adrenalin for some time and felt as if I could sleep for a week or two. All through the summer I had felt a little jaded and tired and my insides had been playing up, I was having lots of stomach problems and during the last couple of weeks before the wedding my appetite had disappeared and I just did not want to eat anything at all. I put this down to the all the happy stress and thought that as life returned to normal, so would I.

But I was hit with a bad dose of flu that put me into my bed. I struggled to shake off and eventually went to see my GP who referred me to a specialist. The first results indicated that there was a small tumour in my bowel, that probably could be removed and I should be fine, but two weeks later when ALL the tests were done the look on the lady doctor's face when we sat down in front of her gave me a very different picture.

Yes it was bowel cancer but it had got to my liver as well. It was bad, very bad – the cancer was inoperable and incurable. She suggested that I should put my affairs in order, do anything special I had planned very soon.

She was sorry but she could do nothing more but send me to another Doctor who might be able to help.

Our future was gone, all those plans, hopes and dreams and what about my precious girls and Paul. Telling the girls was just too much.

Seeing the pain and utter desolation in their eyes just ripped into my very soul and hurt so much I couldn't look at them, I was going to die and rip there world apart and this time mummy just could not make it better.

Telling my eldest daughter was just as bad; you see she was spending her days sitting in a hospice at her father's bedside. He died two weeks before Christmas, he too had Cancer.

We saw another Doctor who proposed Chemotherapy as our best and only way forward and seemed more positive than any of the Drs I had met so far. So on the 18th December I started Chemo. I had lost over 10kgs or 20bls in old money! I was hardly eating anything, I really was very ill indeed.

So as Christmas approached Janine tried to put on a brave face but at the same time struggled with the very real thoughts that this would be her last Christmas with her children and with "what could happen" and the very real sense that this was a very, very serious situation. Janine and I had to come to terms with it and finding God's peace was not easy to do.

Christmas was a tough time with the children preparing Christmas lunch as Janine was not able to do this. We spent time with all of the children including a visit from Janine's eldest Daughter who drove up to her surprise on Boxing day! Making it a very special time.

One of the verses shared with Janine very early on can be found in **Philippians Chapter 4 verses 6&7 (the message)**

Do not fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life

It was only God's presence and God's peace that could truly meet Janine and our families needs at that time. We were able to tell all that was going on to close friends from Church and then decided to share openly and ask the church to pray for God's help and healing.

On the very first occasion the response of the whole church was wonderful and Janine was just so filled with the sense of God's presence and of the love and concern of all those around her as she was engulfed by the whole body as one. You also showed your really practical love by cooking meals for us and also spending time tidying up Janine's pride and joy her garden.

The church was encouraged to pray and week by week we slowly saw physical improvement and at the same time Janine finally found that place of peace that God was still in control and that he really was in charge and that she could trust Him with her cancer.

Janine struggled a lot with facing the side effects of the drugs she was given, they caused problems with nausea and sickness, mouth ulcers, loss of sensation in her fingers and sore eyes to name just a few. She was left feeling very tired and often had to spend much time resting.

Slowly but surely we saw Janine start to put weight back on and the first unexpected healing happened when Janine's frozen left shoulder was suddenly healed.

This was followed by an old broken tooth that decided to remove itself from deep within her gum. We had not prayed for these things and as Janine's doctor pointed out when quizzed – chemotherapy does not usually do that!

The Friday night prayer meetings have been a real joy especially as the young children have been so faithful in praying for Janine and us all as a family. We have also been able to widen the vision and pray for other who are sick as well.

We well remember at the very first prayer session young Elijah whilst we were praying slowly peeled all of the shiny stars from a picture of Janine's liver. We accepted this as a prophetic statement from God that as we prayed the cancer would go as the stars had been showing where the cancer was!

Time passed and we continued with the treatment.

Then in March we had a CT scan to check progress and ended up with a smiling doctor and dancing nurses as the scan showed a significant reduction in the cancer in Janine's liver and the cancer in the bowel was much smaller.

As a church we rejoiced and were able to thank God for so faithfully answering our prayers.

During April, May and June we have continued with the chemo drugs and you have continued to support us so wonderfully in prayer.

We had a further CT scan on Monday this week with the results due on Tuesday. The 24 hours between Monday's scan and Tuesday results was hard work.

Janine's sense of relief once we got the results was huge as the doctor shared she was outwardly very calm – although slightly disappointed and had much inner turmoil.

The results showed that the cancer was stable and not growing – there has not been any significant change since March. We would ask you therefore to be persisting in prayer for her healing. Please keep praying for her.

Once away from the hospital – we had our fare share of tears as the emotions she had been containing were released. We now have a plan to move forward with. Above all this both Janine and I truly know that God loves and cares for us and we have been able to trust Him to answer our prayers and meet our needs.

Janine would say she has seen many answers to prayer for ourselves and others. We have been so very pleased to hear the very good news about Zac and Sara's babies that we have been praying for. Indeed to hear this week that they are both now doing so well and there are now plans for them to leave hospital and be able to go home.

Through all that we have been through it has been great to know that God is with us and to be aware of Him close beside us although there have been days that have been more of a struggle than others.

We would say that we have both grown throughout this experience and we truly know and declare to you that

“God is Good all the time.”

So that's our story to date – we have now been married for almost 7 years and instead of just one son – I now have 4 daughters and a son!

What is interesting is that one of the first things that I remember suggesting Janine should read in the bible was the Book of Job. If ever someone in the bible understood suffering it would be Job – lets think about his story – if you have a bible then turn to Job chapter one but I'm just going to tell the story briefly by putting this in a more up-to-date context and try and work out how we might react.

Let's think of an older Christian we know, maybe a church elder or pastor, or a businessman with a nice house and large family.

One day we hear that his business has gone to the wall and he is now bankrupt and penniless. He has lost everything. His house is to be re-possessed because he can't pay the mortgage, his only son has been killed in a car crash and he has been diagnosed with a life threatening disease. I'm sure we would feel sorry for him but I wonder what we would think were the reasons for all his problems. Why had this happened?

The danger is we can jump to conclusions about why this is happening – but we need instead to be seeking God for wisdom and discernment first.

But surely we can agree that this man like Job suffered much :

- He suffered loss of wealth and possessions
- He suffered the loss of his family
- He was to suffer the loss of his health

And even later in Job's story he was to suffer the misunderstanding and condemnation of his friends

Yet as the bible tells as we read the rest of the book the truth for Job is quite different.

Indeed we are told that this was a period of testing allowed by God and limited by God. It did not go on forever. And in all that he faced Job never stopped trusting God.

So this morning - for those who are in that dark place of testing – maybe in what feels like the wilderness where God seems to have gone quiet. I can say with certainty that as you continue to seek and look for God, to dig deeper and deeper you will find Him.

But let's read on to the end of the story of Job in chapter 42

Job 42 v12 (The Message)

Job lived on another 140 years, living to see his children and grandchildren—four generations of them! Then he died—an old man, a full life.

You see God had a plan and a purpose in Job's life and that was to bless him.

As you hear about Janine and my story this morning – I wonder how you would respond to God. Can you see him as a loving heavenly father who you can go to and sit on His lap and say “Dad – I love you and know you have the best for me in mind!”

Janine and I have faced many challenges – especially during this last 6 months. We don't yet know the final chapter of our story!

BUT we do know that God has been with us, we know God loves us, we know that as we have prayed God has answered and is still answering our prayers along with all of your prayers.

We know that God has a plan for our family, Janine longs to see her children all married and to have her grandchildren sitting on her lap.

We have had to accept that in all of this we have to trust God, to be with us, that the plan he has is for good and one that will give us a future and a hope.

In all we face, we trust God to use the skills of the doctors, the chemotherapy drugs along with His amazing miraculous powers to bring full healing to Janine.

I know that through all of this Janine has grown closer to God – we have prayed, we have cried, we have shouted at each other and at God on some of our bleakest days – but God has always been there. It is so reassuring to know that our lives are in the hands of someone who really does know all the answers to all the questions we could ever ask.

What is also so very wonderful is that there have been so many times when God has sent someone to visit Janine just at that time when she has so needed help and encouragement. There have been so many times that as you have gathered around us and prayed we have been so blessed and touched by God's peace, presence and love.

I'd like to share a story that Jesus told – You can find it Matthew the very first book of the New Testament - It's a story Jesus tells at the end of day when he had been sharing with the crowds who had followed him.

It was an open air preach on a mountain side. You can find all Jesus had to say in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7.

It where he teaches on many things including how we should pray as Martin has been sharing with us over the last few weeks. As he concluded His message he shared a story about two builders.

I don't know if as he looked down he could see some building work going on in the valley below or not. But this was how he summed things up that day to those around him!

It a story about quite a normal event - here were two men

who needed to build a house.

Let's think about the first man - I'll call him Joshua - Joshua had purchased a plot of land and wanted to build a house for himself and his family. Because of the nature of the weather in Israel/Palestine the building work would be done during the Hot, dry summer months. This brings with it some problems as the ground tends to get baked hard in the sunshine.

Anyway, Joshua starts by spending time digging his foundations, he digs deep until he finds the rock beneath as he wants to build a strong and sturdy home for his family. But all this digging is hard work in the sunshine and takes time. But eventually the foundations are completed and he is able to start building his house.

We aren't told how long it took but he just got on and did it. He gets the work completed and is able to move in along with his family and they feel safe and secure.

When the rains come though they are heavier than normal, the river bursts its banks and water starts to flow down the street in which Joshua has built his house and it turns to mud.

The rains and wind continue and the water gets worse and worse. But because Joshua spent time in digging deep foundations for his house it copes with the storm and Joshua and his family are kept safe and sound.

Jesus then tells us about a second builder, I call him Matthew, he too has some land, maybe it was a neighboring plot to Joshua. He too wanted to build a house for his family. He decides he just wants a simple one or two-roomed house with walls no more than seven feet high. He

opts to build on the hard ground rather than dig foundations. He reasons that the rock is down there somewhere and it'll be ok.

He sets stone on stone and builds his house completing the work in short time. Again he and his family move in and he is very comfortable and happy with his efforts. Again though the rains come they are heavier than normal, the river bursts its banks and water starts to flow down the street in which Matthew has built his house and it turns to mud.

The rains and wind continue and the water gets worse and worse. The street is flooded, the clay beneath the stone walls of his house begins to ooze and the stones start to move. An odd stone falls out of the wall, the walls start to bulge as part of the wall slowly sinks, eventually, the walls collapse and the house is ruined

Jesus tells us that Joshua is like a wise man - who hears what Jesus has to say and bases their life upon it. Jesus then explains that Matthew is like a foolish man who hears the same words from Jesus but ignores them.

There is much, more that could be said about this parable But this morning I want to point out one simple truth that it illustrates in CAPITAL LETTERS 10 feet TALL!
The storm CAME, the wind blew, the floods came to on BOTH of the Houses!

When Jesus one on earth he had his fair share of troubles and problems and hard times, we have seen from the story of Job that was true for him too as well as for many others in the bible

The truth is whether you are a Christian, a Muslim, Hindu, a Sikh, a Buddhist an agnostic or an atheist this morning the

STORMS will come into your life. I am sorry but hard times will come. Troubles will come, you will have to face difficult and hard and very painful times.

They will come if you are a spirit filled, daily bible reading, Christian who fasts and prays every week.

They will come if you are ignoring God and walking your own way.

When they come they have the potential to destroy everything you have and are.

For Janine and I when we sat there last November listening to a lady doctor telling us that Janine had Cancer in her bowel and most of her Liver. The situation was absolutely terrible, she basically told us to go away set our affairs in order, take any trips we wanted as there was not long left for Janine to live.

Cancer is a scary word in our British Culture; along with Death it's just one of those things we will not ever talk about BUT the truth is we so often come face to face with both.

I know that without the rock of Jesus beneath this storm of Cancer we would have swept us away. Without your prayers and God's help we would not have come through this ordeal.

I was also encouraged as I read the story of Jesus when he was asked to go and heal his friend Lazarus we find the story in John 11v4 where Jesus says ***"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."***

During February we were presented with a plaque to put on the wall that states quite simply "EXPECT A MIRACLE". Along with this we can put the words from Luke 1v37 which declares quite simply "Nothing is impossible with God".

And so this morning we would declare to you afresh that we know that our lives are safe in God's hands. We believe that God is healing Janine's Body and we have decided come what may we will trust and follow Jesus.

One of the books that has helped us is one called – **"When God and cancer meet"** by Lynn Eib – a lady diagnosed with cancer more than 15 years ago. It's a book that shares honest stories about people with cancer and how God has helped them to live with cancer rather than just thinking they were dying from cancer.

One chapter in particular reduce Janine and I to tears – it was entitled **"Either way she wins"**, where as Molly prayed to God as she listened – God's simple answer was either way you win.

He reminded Molly that he loved her and he loved her family more than she ever could and whatever happened he would take care of them.

The challenge was to trust God both with her own life but also with the lives and future of her children.

We have chosen to trust God with our future – no matter what is in store for us. Janine still finds it hard if she is totally honest to fully trust God with the future of her Children and me but we are still working on that!

We give thanks and declare to you again that God is Good – ALL THE TIME and that is true “No matter what my eyes may see – no matter what my ears may hear”

So today if you are in that hard place – I encourage you to seek God – to dig deeper – to keep seeking until you find Him. His promise is that as you seek him with all your heart you will find him.

In closing my questions to you would be

- When the storms do come along – whatever they may be - come as they will – are you today standing firm on the Rock of Jesus – or are you simply building on SAND?
- Do you really know God as YOUR loving heavenly father or is he just a distant uncaring entity somewhere out there?

I am going to ask Alice and Sharon to come and sing to you a song based on Psalm 23 the word's of which have been very precious to both Janine and I.