**Friday 5th June**

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.  And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

When we share the Good News of Jesus, it will not be universally acknowledged with joy! That much is very clear from Scripture- we will be misunderstood, there may be trouble ahead! Many of us will have experienced that too. We heard yesterday about Peter and John’s experience, and today we find Paul, writing to a church facing persecution, sharing his approach to suffering for the Good News. Nothing is wasted with God, and he can use our struggles to produce hope if we persevere. Then in verse 5 we read of another role of the Holy Spirit - He is the One through whom we are able to receive and experience the love of God. Many of us have very good Bible knowledge and head understanding- we could give the right answer if asked ‘Is God loving?’ But that journey from the head to the heart is much longer than you might think! Certainly, my own testimony is that I knew *about* the love of God for many years before I experienced the Holy Spirit’s work of pouring His love into my heart. Experiencing His love is life-changing, and available to everyone of us, and will sustain us in a life of hope, and of bringing hope.

*Father, thank you for great love for me - a love that will not let me go. Thank you that even in dark times, you are at work in me to build perseverance, character and hope. During these challenging days, please grow me in the character of Jesus. And Lord, by your Holy Spirit, we ask for a fresh experience and understanding of your life-changing love. Thank you that however much we have known of your love, it is vaster than the ocean, inexhaustible, and there is so much more for us to discover! As we go deeper with you we pray that we will become conduits of your love and hope to those around us. Amen*

