

The reading from Romans today begins with these words, 'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us'.

Well, we certainly know what 'our present sufferings' means.

Not only are we battling a devastating virus that we can't see and bracing ourselves for a second wave and possibly more local lockdowns, but our whole lives have been turned upside down.

Each time the government brings in a new rule we try and work out what it will mean for us and our families and friends. Currently the rules are changing constantly.

Many of the things we always took for granted are no longer certain, like meeting with family and friends for a meal or going to a wedding of someone dear, or a funeral of a precious friend or relation.

Last week I went to the funeral of a dear friend.....well I say went.....I actually sat in my study and watched the whole service live as it was streamed from the crematorium.....what made it even more strange was that, as the man was a brilliant musician, technology enabled him to play for the whole service made possible by recordings that he made during his lifetime. It was indeed a strange experience.

Many of the things that we do today, to protect ourselves and others around us, we would never have dreamt of this time last year. Who ever thought that we would go into a bank wearing a mask and asking for money!

In our reading, as we consider the meaning of this opening verse it's almost as though Paul, who is writing here, we were first introduced to him a few weeks ago when we were looking at the book of Acts, it's almost as if he were standing there holding a balance scale in his hand. Like the ones held by the statue known as Lady Justice on top of the Old Bailey.

On one side he places all the suffering he has experienced, and for him that was a lot: he had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, robbed, he had been sick, hungry, thirsty, cold, blinded for a while, exhausted, maligned and ridiculed, to name just a little of what he suffered.

On the other side of the scale he places the glory he anticipates in the future. And immediately that side of the scale drops down under the greater weight. There's no comparison.

Now Paul goes on to elaborate on that "glory which shall be revealed in us," and that's where the creation comes in.

Romans 8:19. "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God."

That glory is going to be so great that the whole creation looks forward to it.

By "creation" Paul means the sum total of all of nature.

He pictures nature as standing on its tiptoes with its head craning forward eagerly awaiting this remarkable event--"the revealing of the sons of God"

I remember many years ago we went as a party from the church to Post Green for the week, to a Christian festival of teaching, praise and worship.

We were camping all week and met together for worship in the Marquee. I remember that the weather was very kind to us which was just as well as our daughter Naomi celebrated her first birthday there and camping with a small child can have its difficulties. However, on the last day the heaven's opened in the most spectacular way and we had the daddy of all hailstorms. The hailstones were the size of golf balls. People were collecting them and putting them in their caravan fridges in the hopes of showing folks at home later that day.

The rain was so torrential that the field soon became like a bog and the cars and caravans had to be towed out in order to start the journey home. It was like we had experience all four seasons in one day.

While we were at Post Green, we learnt a new song called On Tiptoe by Maggie Durran. The chorus said, "and all creation's straining on tiptoe just to see the sons of God come into their own".

Whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.

The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God's purpose it has been so limited—yet it has been

given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay and have its share in that magnificent liberty which belong to the children of God!

What is God's hope for the entirety of creation along with humanity?

Jonathan said last week that God loves and cares for the world and everything in it..... because the world belongs to God. Psalm 24 v 1 says this "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it"

In this era, when we face the global challenge of climate change with its many impacts, particularly on the poor of the developing world and the diverse creatures facing changing habitats,

I think of when I was a child and walking the Holloway from Harwell to Chilton and enjoying some of the wildflowers which grew there, like cowslips, Scabious, and Sainfoin.

Sadly, these flowers and many others no longer grow there, and it is easy in this day and age to understand that some of creation is extinct due to changing habitats.

Partly this is due to our lack of understanding regarding the natural world and partly because of our disregard for God's creation.

As young children picking posies of the flowers to take home to our mums, it never occurred to us that one day these flowers may not grow in the Holloway anymore. Although I have seen some of these flowers growing around the countryside, I have never seen Sainfoin again.

Globally, of course, the problem becomes much greater with much more serious outcomes, rainforests are being destroyed; oceans are awash with thousands of tonnes of plastic which in itself kills many ocean creatures. Polar Ice caps are melting at an alarming rate. Global warming is on many people's lips.

This Scripture today reminds us to join God in his work at sustaining creation.

Meanwhile we await that day when all humanity and all of creation shall come into their fullness, being at peace with God, with each other and with the creation.