



God's power is pure

Julia McGuinness *reflects on* Ephesians 1:15-end

Power in itself is neutral, but it is often used by humankind as a negative force: in warfare it crushes the weak; in finance it buys choice, control and exemption from accountability.

Paul's prayer of gratitude for the Ephesian believers rises to a crescendo as he prays that they might come into a richer knowledge of God's power. God's power is pure. It is not used to prove superiority – what need does God have of that? – but to bless and bring life. Paul cites the most supreme example of God's amazing power – raising Jesus from the deepest, most godforsaken place to the highest honour at God's right hand in the heavenly places. But there is more.

God does not hoard power in the heavens for self-aggrandisement. God makes this power available for our use as we live lives of faith and love, seeking to grow into Christ's likeness. This extraordinary power may not explode like fireworks in our ordinary lives. It may be more like the quiet growth of a tiny acorn into a majestic oak. It may emerge through insightful words or acts of kindness that transform situations, bring courage or enable us to change course when we need to.

Where are we feeling particularly powerless and weak? What would it be like to invite our Lord to fill us with the power that, as Paul reminds us, God generously gives? 🙏

Lord, when we know we are weak and vulnerable, help us not to turn away from you in dismay, but rather to open ourselves all the more fully to your resurrection power, that alone can transform us from within. Amen.

World AIDS Day

by Caroline Hodgson

Friday is World AIDS Day, which has been marked on 1 December every year since 1988. For those in the West who are old enough to remember it, the AIDS pandemic might be associated with the 1980s and 1990s. But in fact the number of deaths from AIDS peaked in 2004.

The statistics are truly shocking. AIDS has killed over 36 million people worldwide, and an estimated 37.7 million people are

living with HIV, making it one of the most significant public health issues in history.

World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic and providing an opportunity to remember and mourn those who have died of the disease. Thanks to recent improved access to antiretroviral treatment in many regions, the death rate from AIDS has decreased by sixty-four per cent since 2004.

So on Friday why not make some time to pray for those who have been lost to and affected by this terrible disease. 🙏

“**Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.**”

Psalm 25:4-5

The Bible through the week

by Richard Greatrex

Richard Greatrex continues our look at the Bible readings for the coming week, from Monday to Saturday.

In this week's readings from the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar hears of future kingdoms, although he might prefer to hear that his own kingdom will last for ever. His son, Belshazzar, hears that he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Surprisingly, both kings take the news well and Daniel is given status and wealth. But it is not all plain sailing. Daniel

is determined to maintain his relationship with God and takes risks to do so. First, he refuses the food that the king has assigned to him and insists on praying, although the king has signed a decree that prayers must be to him alone. This results in Daniel famously being thrown to the lions.

Some people don't want the truth, but prefer to be told what they want to hear. In the Gospel readings (Luke 21:1-36), Jesus describes frightening events that will occur before the Son of Man comes in glory. He urges us to stay firm, to pray. In effect, like Daniel, to maintain our integrity. 🙏