

Thought for the day from Pat Basson

By the time you receive this thought, if all goes according to plan, those of us who are visiting shops will now be wearing masks or some sort of face covering whether we want to or not (except for a few people who have valid reasons not to). As I write this on Thursday, there is speculation that there are going to be problems because some people feel it is an affront to their human rights to be forced to comply. Hopefully sense will prevail and our shop workers will not be put in the difficult position of trying to police the situation and if necessary barring people from entering.

Strangely, although I find my homemade mask rather hot and a little uncomfortable in that it tends to ride up to my eyes when I look down to unpack my shopping basket or trolley onto the conveyor belt, I quite like feeling anonymous and hidden behind it in my own little world. I can, through choice, keep my distance and turn in on myself in a way which is somewhat selfish and anti-social.

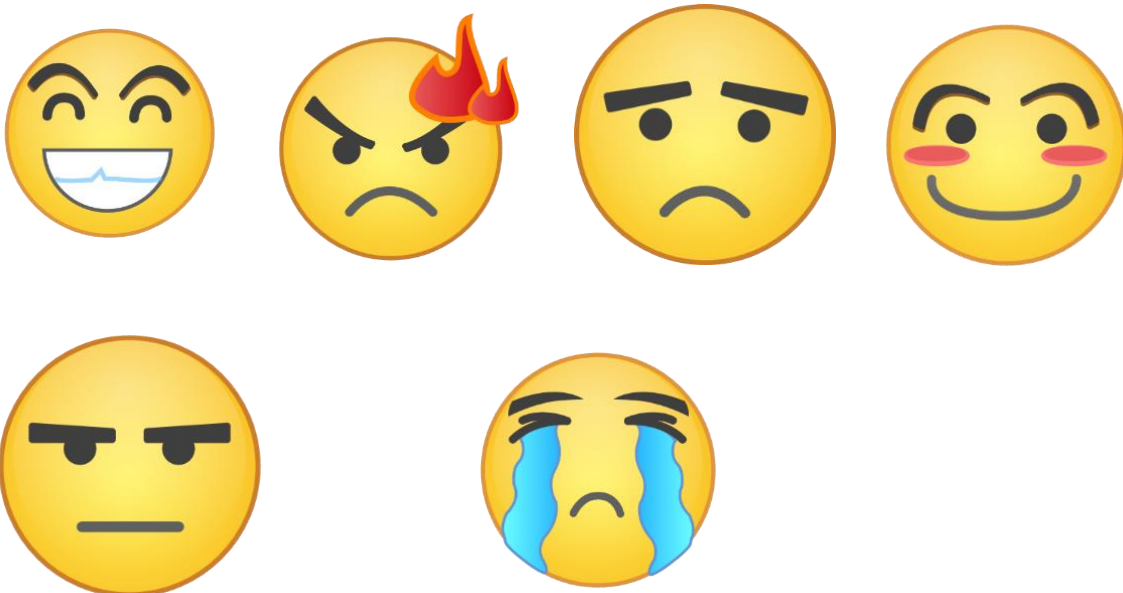


Speaking to someone the other day I admitted that I actually enjoy being at home - although at the same time realising that I am fortunate in not being at home alone, being in good health and having shelter, food and clothing and all my other creature comforts - I know for some of you the picture is not nearly as easy and you would give a great deal to be able to go out and mix freely with other people. She was surprised as she thought I would be missing my normal activities as I appear to be a very "outgoing" person.

Many years ago, in the time of Rev Stephen Williams for those of you who remember him, we had a service at Rothwell around the theme of masks. It was actually quite ground breaking at the time as the chairs were arranged in the round, so that we could see one another and there was nowhere to hide.

Basically we were challenged to think about the "masks" we wear in our everyday lives. Some of us are carrying deep hurts and pain, some of us are holding anger in our hearts, some of us have prejudices or viewpoints that we would rather keep hidden, for some it's pride, greed, selfishness and other traits which we know are not attractive. So we come together, ask the question, "How are you?" of each other as we move to our seats and reply quickly "Fine thanks" wearing our unreadable masks. Heaven forbid someone should actually try to unburden themselves hoping for a kind listening ear! But at the end of the service I remember over coffee there were little clusters of people sharing, there were some hankies dabbing at teary eyes, and even some hugs (those were the days!) as people let down their masks and told the truth to each other.

Our shopping masks are causing problems for some people as it is difficult to read people's facial expressions and emotions. I wonder if you have a posh phone that has "emojis"? I think they're a bit like Marmite, you're either a fan and use them just about every message you send, or you hate and avoid them at all costs. But I thought I'd give you a little quiz just to see if you can identify the emotions supposedly portrayed by these emojis.



Answers at the end!

The gospels are packed full of encounters between Jesus and individuals - I know I've said this before in previous thoughts I have written over this time - but it's something that draws me back time and time again. So many of the

people we hear about were hiding behind masks. Zacchaeus was a Roman employee but he was a cheat, the woman at the well pretended her latest man was her husband, Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish ruling council, he came to Jesus in the darkness so he wouldn't be seen by anyone. All of them had secrets which they hid from the people around them. But when they came face to face with Jesus they immediately knew that Jesus saw straight through the masks they wore and deep into their hearts to the secrets they carried. I imagine that their first reaction to this revelation was probably fear, the fear of being found out as the people they really were and their expectation was for judgement and condemnation. Read their stories in Luke 19, John 4 and John 3. But in each case Jesus accepts them as they are "warts an' all", addresses their deepest needs and gives them new, abundant life, forgiving their sin, turning them around and setting them free to live the life God intends for them. John 10:10b "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

So the question for us today is "What mask are you hiding behind?" Jesus waits for us to come to Him and take off that mask, after all He sees straight through it anyway and loves us in spite of whatever is deep within that we try to bury and hide.

As a personality type known as a "control freak" I find it so difficult to "let go and let God" sort out what needs sorting out in order to straighten out my life yet again and set me back on the right path. In the Covenant Service back in January many of us read the words,

"I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you
or brought low for you

Who would have guessed what was coming for us all this year? But God is trustworthy and unchangeable. His promises are faithful and He will keep us no matter what, so don't hide from His wonderful grace and love.

For those of you watching on YouTube there is a video entitled "Life is Fragile" for those of you reading these are the words:

"Life is fragile. It's a fact we are learning in real time ... every day. What we once called normal has seemingly disappeared. There is uncertainty in the air, restlessness in our hearts. Things we once took for granted are becoming difficult to find. Our usual day to day has evolved into this odd chaos. Peace is becoming obsolete. Many have lost jobs, security and those they love. The pain is undeniable. But what if our fragility caused us to lean harder into God? What if, in our weakness, we chose to rely more on His strength? Would our outlook change? Would the peace which passes understanding begin to drown out the noise of this moment? Would we walk in a quiet confidence knowing our God is mighty to save? We are not promised tomorrow, but we are given a simple truth to stand on: Our God goes before us. He will never leave us, He will never forsake us. Yes, life is fragile... But in our weakness, He is strong."

And a video song entitled "All that I am..."

All that I am, All I can be, All that I have, All that is me...
Accept and use, Lord, as you would choose, Lord, right now today...
Take every passion, every skill, Take all my dreams, and bend them to your will..
My all I give, Lord, For you I'll live, Lord, come what may.

Often I come with my problems and cares, running to you when distressed...
But I must bring you the whole of my life.. Lord, I must give you my best...

All that I am.....

Life has no purpose unless it is yours.. Life without you has no goal...
All that fulfils me is doing your will.. Knowing that you're in control...

All that I am,,,

Have a good day and continue to keep safe.

And the answers to the Emoji quiz are from left to right:
Laughing, Angry, Frowning, Smiling, Calm and Crying