

Can you see what I see?

As most of you know I have been away over the weekend. I had the opportunity to camp in a place called Newnes. Now Newnes isn't very big even though many years ago it had an oil and shale mine with a town built around the mines. The railway ran from the mines through the glow worm tunnels to Lithgow. Now there is the Newnes Pub/General Store, some holiday cabins, camping and the National Park close by.



We camped next to the Wolgan River which has little water at the moment but there was a lot of damage to trees from the recent fires. Grass had grown and the birds were singing but no sign of the wombats or kangaroos which we see each time we camp. Nor the goannas or lyre birds we heard last time we were there.

Even in this green place there was a sense of nature beginning to recover but this was not the case elsewhere.

Along the Bell's Line of Road we could see so much damage from bushfires and it appeared as though there were things we had never seen before appearing before our eyes. Dense foliage had been removed and we could see so much further than usual.

The Ezekiel reading set for this coming Sunday tells a story of dry bones. It is a reminder of the power of God- so great that even the dry bones could be raised up to tell who God is. The story is one of challenge for us- in how we share our faith, but also one of hope- hope not in ourselves but in the power of God to do more than we can ever imagine.

On Saturday we went for a 4 Wheel Drive through the bush to a place called the Lost City. This is on the Newnes Plateau and is difficult to access however we were there 3-4 years ago, this time- it looked a bit like a moonscape.



There are pagoda like structures which can look like castles or apartments blocks but the devastation of the bushfires meant that burnt trees were everywhere- even the rocks had been blackened and the ground was a grey sandy dust. But if we looked hard enough, we could see patches of green from where the run-off from recent rains had come.

What was once green and lush was no longer. Instead it appeared like dry bones- and

we wondered whether anything could come of such destruction.

In some ways a lot of our thinking was tainted by the compounding factors of drought, bushfires, storm/flood and now the Covid 19 virus. Where is God at work in the midst of such trauma? What power does God have in what we are going through?



In some ways it is easy to feel a little like Martha in the reading from the gospel. If you were here 'my brother would not have died.' v21

Do we have the same feeling? Can we find ourselves caught up in the media and government declarations and social distancing and.....? Do we feel overwhelmed by what has happened and the great unknown that lies ahead of us?

Then we hear words of reassurance. We hear words that remind us that what we experience right now and even into the future, there is something more.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Sometimes it is when we go through the tough times when we feel as though something within us may be breaking that the seeds within us, the seeds that come from God can break open.

Just like seed pods growing in the wild, the fire has helped them break open to release the seeds which will continue to bring life in the future.



Sometimes, out the driest and most dark of places we see something new rising up. There is growth in the midst of the devastation. God is seen at work.

At this time we do not know how long it will be until this storm of Covid 19 has been weathered. We do not know what lies ahead.

What we do know is that God is with us, just as God has always been with us.

Jesus IS the resurrection and the life and ALL who believe in him will never die.

I see the bones, I see the devastation after the bushfire, I see the fear and anxiety that people are experiencing. Yet I also see God at work in the opportunities to stop and reflect, to rediscover what is most important in life.

My prayer for you this day is that we might be able to hold each other in spirit as we grow closer to God.

May you see the glory of God and may the healing, loving grace of God bring you peace in this strange time.