

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; John 14:1-14

Today, 65 million people are displaced across the world. That's a staggering number. Ironically – or maybe not – it is the poorer countries, the developing countries, who host them. 80% of all refugees are living in developing countries who are struggling to help them due to lack of resources in the first place.

The situation reminds me of the widow's mite. She had next to nothing but she gave generously all she had. That's what the developing countries are doing. In materials prepared for this Christian Aid Week we read: 'Christian Aid calls on world leaders to commit to long-term plans for assisting countries hosting refugees and communities hosting large numbers of people who have been displaced within their own countries. We also urge states to introduce, increase and strengthen the existing 'safe routes' for refugees, such as humanitarian visas, family reunification and relocation schemes.'¹

The psalmist says in great faith: 'my times are in your hands'. It seems times of the refugees all around the world are in human hands – it seems they're so dependent on the good will of governments, organisations, individuals willing – or not – to help them.

At the same time it feels that our hearts are hardened by the awful news pouring in every day through the media but also by our own safety and comfort. Every year Christian Aid seek to soften our hearts yet again describing the plight of folk around the globe needing our help and support. We respond to it year by year. I hope and pray this year will be no different.

It's more difficult this year though. Usually the needy people Christian Aid support are far away on other continents. But the refugees are on our doorstep. There are two families in Orkney, there are many more in other British communities. There are so many of them displaced around Europe. We might feel threatened by so many being so close to our home. We might feel our security, our well-being, our peace of mind are threatened.

Christian Aid writers say: 'In the gospel of John, Jesus says he goes to prepare a place for us. There is something profoundly moving about a place being prepared – it says you are wanted, you are welcome, this is your home.'²

If Jesus does that, we can but follow – however uncomfortable we might be at first. Jesus throughout his ministry proclaimed a powerful message of hospitality, welcome and inclusion. He calls us to do the same. The reassuring thought is that he's also greater than any evil including our own misgivings and fear – he can break through them. Let's see him do it in our hearts as we start with a prayer action suggested by Christian Aid:

There is an ancient Scottish blessing that says: 'I will put a stone on your cairn'. 'Cairns are used in different ways: as a marker on a journey, as a memorial to someone, as a symbol of success in reaching your destination.'³

¹ <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-01/j10558-caw17-sermons.pdf>, p. 5.

² Ibid, p. 6.

We are all invited now to build a cairn as a ‘prayer in action’ – every stone represents a prayer for safe passage, for people along the way to offer care and in memory of those who have been lost.’

Amen.

³ Ibid, p. 6.