

## St James (2020)

This weekend is Saturday the 25 July, the feast of St James the Apostle, and Sunday the 26 July, beginning the 17th week of Ordinary Time.

One Hope Project sing, 'Good work in me'. As you enter into prayer, spend a moment reflecting on the good work God is doing in you at the moment.

Today's reading is from the Second letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—'I believed, and so I spoke'—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

We have this treasure in jars of clay. The Bible makes many references to clay jars. What are the characteristics of a clay jar? Can you picture one now? Stay with that picture. Is there anything special about it?

Now picture the same jar being filled with treasure. What could the jar, and the treasure, represent? What if the clay jar were broken? What then?

The writer makes reference to suffering and despair. Many of us have experienced, or witnessed, deep suffering over the last few months. What would it be like to be "afflicted in every way, but not crushed"? What would it take? Is there ever any hope in suffering? Can you think of someone you've come across in the last few weeks who, in spite of a hopeless situation, has shown extraordinary strength?

As you listen to the passage again, remember that God understands despair. What does He offer us in our despair? Talk to God openly about your feelings.

In these last few moments ponder again this treasure in jars of clay. Can you ask God for the grace to become aware of the treasure in your own life? And the ability to see the treasure in others?

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.