



St John's Cathedral 聖公會聖約翰座堂

Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

Message of Hope: We are living between the times

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Warm Greetings in Eastertide. I am Philip Wickeri, advisor to the Archbishop on historical and theological studies, and honorary chaplain at St John's Cathedral.

We are living between the times, between the time before the COVID-19 virus and the time when we imagine the threat of the virus will be gone. This in-betweenness evokes a sense of listlessness, an uneasiness mixed with worry or even despair. These are very real feelings caused by real events. Our society and our daily lives have been disrupted, and many of the plans we have made have had to be put on hold. We ourselves may be caring for a loved one with the virus, or mourning the loss of a friend or relative. Many of us face financial difficulties or the loss of a job. All of us worry about the future of our society. Given the uncertainty, the isolation and the suffering all around us, it is easy to explain feelings of anxiety and despair. And yet we believe our fear and uncertainty are not the last words.

I have just reread the short novel "Love in a Fallen City," by Eileen Chang (張愛玲《傾城之戀》). The story is set in Hong Kong during the war years, which was also a listless and uncertain time. People were living in financial hardship and facing terror and the loss of loved ones. In the novel, we see uncertainty and fear, love and passion, anxiousness and despair among all the main characters. But two people fall in love, despite all the odds against them, despite family pressures and the uncertainty of war. In them, we discover a sense of what it means to live for today and hope for a better tomorrow. According to Chang, the "original" idea for the story came from the real-life experience of a couple she knew. The couple's love story reflects conventional cultural codes of behavior and fictional or non-fictional historical episodes. Therefore, *Love in a Fallen City* to some extent can be seen as an adaptation of a true story of Hong Kong during World War II. Against the background of the terror and horrors of the war, love remains triumphant. "Love in a Fallen City" is one of the great literary achievements of wartime China, and a story for our times.

Christian life has always been about living between the times, we live between the already – for Christ has come and redeemed us, and the not yet – for we await his coming again. This creates a certain tension in our lives, but Christianity means living with this tension in the faith that Christ has died for us and lives for us. In these times of the corona pandemic, we will experience worry, fear and real hardship and loss, and yet we live in the assurance that Christ is here beside us, suffering with us even as he

comforts us. Jesus came so that we “may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10) That is the message of the gospel.

I can understand the listlessness of our times, I sometimes feel it myself, but we need not let our fears overcome us, for we are part of a people, the Church, who believes that God is with us. That is the meaning of Immanuel, God with us. The Church is also with us, and our priests and co-workers are helping people every day. Amidst the horror of the virus, the threat it poses to human life, the economic difficulties it has caused, and the suffering and deaths of so many innocent people, we dare to say that we live for today. For tomorrow will take care of itself.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with you all.