

## ***From The Vicar....***

My mind goes back to an early May morning camped out in the Rocky Mountains in Canada near the township of Banff. I was there for some late skiing up at Sunshine Valley. The sun was just coming up and it was freezing cold in my tent, so I thought I would get up and get a fire going to warm up and cook some bacon and eggs. I stuck my head out of the tent just in time to see a large bear on the prowl, scavenging for food. Fortunately, I had done what you are supposed to, and put my supplies in the boot of my car (never in the tent, for then the bear will pay a personal visit!). After a while, it wandered off, disappointed.

It was one of those moments when your whole life flashes before you like a video, as you prepare to meet your maker.

Later, a park warden asked me what kind of bear it was, for they were concerned in case it was a Grizzly, the most aggressive kind. I asked how you tell the difference. He said that an ordinary bear would climb the tree after you, whereas a Grizzly would simply push the tree over. I said I hoped I would never have the opportunity to find out.

Perhaps you have had moments like that, your life flashing before you. You wonder about your death, and what it will bring. For faithful Christians, death ceases to be an enemy, because our Lord Jesus Christ has conquered it for ever through his death and resurrection and ascension into heaven. His mission was to make a way back to God for us beyond our earthly lives.

But what Christian faith is about and what going to church is about, in part, is preparing for that moment when we shall have to give account to God for our lives. Through worshipping God and receiving his grace through prayer, adoration, and Holy Communion, our souls are being made ready for eternal life, and our lives in this world made new. We pray that at the end, God will know us as one of his own and receive us into eternal life.

What that bear reminded me of is that we need to be ready to meet our God at any moment. The time to be prepared for heaven is *now* – not tomorrow, not somewhere down the line, not at the end of my life by some death-bed confession – but now. Now is the time to be prepared.

My love and prayers,

***Stephen***

P.S. A very big thank-you to everyone who supported our Church on Gift Day. As I write, the total raised is just over £10,000 including potential tax recovery. It is good to know that our community cares for its Parish Church.