

## 27. Will life ever feel normal again?

### John 16:33

Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world".

What is 'normal' life? In West Cumbria, 'normal' means everything up to 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010. Since then, places we have walked a thousand times seem different to us. There is a feeling inside many of us of emptiness and unease. Even as we try to get on with normal activities we catch reminders of what happened, and the sense of shock comes back.

I don't think we can go back to the old 'normal'. Time will pass, but in order to go back we would need to forget. That can't, and probably shouldn't happen.

Many feel as though there has been a loss of innocence, a paradise lost.

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble". That is normal life! When things are going swimmingly well, it's exceptional. The problem is that we believe that the exceptional should be normal; so when the normal kicks in, and we are faced with fear and uncertainty, we think it's exceptional.

I'm not denying that what the gunman did was exceptional. But the lingering sense that we are not as secure as we thought is normal. That's the sensation many people in the world live with every day. Even in our area, there are very many people for whom normal life is filled with trouble and uncertainty.

Today's verse records the words of Jesus to his disciples on the night he was arrested. He knew that their sense of normality was about to be subjected to a rollercoaster ride. Within hours he would be dead, leaving them shattered. Three days later, he would rise again. Six weeks later, he would ascend into heaven, leaving them as leaders of a world-wide mission in the teeth of a hostile world.

What was normal life going to be from that point onwards? Jesus' words create the new normality: "I have overcome the world". No matter what trouble would come their way, Jesus' victory was their new constant. If he had really won, they could experience his peace every day.

We need to find a new normality in West Cumbria, one that is more secure than the old one. We can find that new normality from the moment we put our trust in the words of Jesus. If he has won, and he loves us, we have peace. And it is that inner peace, above anything else, that we long for.