The church I’m standing in this morning is rather different from the one that you and I normally see If I just pan the camera around so that you can see it. Where there used to be about 220 seats now there are just 48 because that’s what 2 metres distancing does for you. There it is, rather different, isn’t it. Its like someone’s 3/4 the way through a vast game of musical chairs. And we’re going to have to think about how we do our services going forward if 2 metres remains the rule - but more of that on another day. For now we might settle for realising that this is what we have to do next. This is what’s coming up for us. Which is perhaps a helpful way to begin thinking about that gospel reading we’ve just heard. Because this reading today tells us a lot about what Matthew and the people he wrote his gospel for what they thought was going to happen next to them. They lived at a time of great suffering for the young Christian community a suffering, perhaps, they believed, that was going to usher in a new age completely. The end of the world was nigh

and what was happening proved it. So those comments about not fearing those who might kill the body were for real and why perhaps that entreaty from Jesus to remain steadfast to him has a rather ominous edge. This was no ordinary time for them. Matthew’s Christian community that we hear of today lived in momentous times: the Temple in Jerusalem had not long been destroyed son was betraying father, and daughter betraying mother. Things that were covered up were being uncovered. These were extraordinary, once in a generation occurrences. Something, perhaps, that might resonate rather strongly with us given our own recent experiences. Times like this that they - and we - have lived through can stretch us to our limits and almost sort of leave a feeling that we’ve fallen asleep somewhere and woken up in a different life. Its hard enough to know what’s happened let alone work out what to do next. But the gospel today does leave us clues as to how we might do that. A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master but it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master. Follow me, has been Jesus’ constant call throughout his life. He hasn’t said you have to **be** me - just follow. Be like me.

So one pathway to coping with what comes next whether it be in these momentous times

or when more like the everyday returns is to wonder how we might be like our master and teacher a little bit more - which might lead us to something about trusting where we stand in the great order of things. For those in the midst of persecution it was a comfort to know that every hair of their head was numbered. God’s attention to detail knows no bounds. Nothing is too much trouble meaning that even the very least of us is considered worthy of counting. Jesus basked in the full knowledge of God’s love for him. O Lord, You have searched me out and known me You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought from afar, as the psalmist wrote with that sense that we are known entirely and loved completely. Jesus trusted in that, I think, and because of it was able to love as he himself was loved. There’s no such thing as a wrong note, Art Tatum, celebrated black American Jazz pianist, once said, its what comes next that matters most. We all play bad notes and most of us play bad notes of large and small consequence many times every day. What matters is what we do with it. What matters is how we repair what has broken, how we make good that which we have damaged, how take the pieces of the past - either recent or from long before - and make them into something new. That’s where the music lies, and that’s where the sound of God is to be heard