

Read the text of the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'Thought For The Day' on BBC Radio 4's Today programme this morning.

Good morning. Last week was Mental Illness Awareness week. I was struck by the fact that people from all over the world and from all walks of life spoke on social media about their experiences of mental illness. Much has been made of social media worsening mental health issues. On this occasion it enabled people to share their stories, communicate honestly and feel connected to others.

We often think it's just us who are struggling, that everyone else is doing okay. That's because we don't talk about our mental health. The stigma is still there, so we feel more alone than we need to.

I know that being a Christian doesn't mean that everything's okay forever. In the Bible, there are people struggling with darkness and depression. There is a whole book, the Book of Job, in which we see someone experiencing terrible suffering.

Last year, I realised that I was depressed. I have a daughter who has been very open about her experiences with depression and she helped me see that it wasn't something to be ashamed of – it's just life, and I got help. Others still face that stigma and loneliness. Today we will be hosting a mental health conference at Lambeth Palace, looking at ways the church and others can encourage communities of love, support and openness.

Good communities are places where mental health issues do not prevent people from having authentic and honest relationships. Good communities are able to hold pain, honour and acknowledge it, whilst putting it within the wider story of God and His hope for His people.

Christians believe we have a saviour, a rescuer, who knows intimately what it means to suffer. Amidst all the brokenness, Christ weeps with us. In his resurrection, I believe Christ restores us. Not necessarily in the way we expected, but he makes us whole in a way that makes sense.

It is my prayer today that anyone who is walking in darkness knows this: you are not alone. You are truly valued and deeply loved. Reaching out and talking to someone can be the first step back into the light.

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