A beautiful reality about God is nothing is forced on anyone. If you don’t want to recognise God’s love – you don’t have to, if you don’t want to be forgiven, you don’t have to. You can walk away anytime you like from the relationship and there will always be people who will try to encourage you to walk. Even family – even family for Jesus. Come on, walk away from it all and get carpentering. Eve encourages Adam to walk, and they hide. It represents us all as we do hide, assured that we can do without God. But there are consequences of spiritual desert of our own making.

Jesus family must have seen the good he was doing, but he was not conforming to the norms of the day and that has always come at a terrible cost. The press have been reminding us about those single mothers in the 1960s and 70s, and before, who had to give up their babies because they were not conforming – however much they might love, or have the funds to support the child, the way forward was to give up the baby for adoption and be told that you are an evil girl.

Jesus, disciples and associates were not conforming and the cost was high.

But the church has begun to recover its true task now. In the 18th century you only have to read John Wesley’s sermons and you realise that the focus was on the consequences of sin and Hell. The inquisitions that tried to change people’s mind ‘for their own good’, otherwise they would got to eternal punishment, were appalling. Do you see Jesus doing that at all?

The 20th century morphed the fear of hell into the cultural norm of coming to church. If you didn’t go to the chapel or church you were an atheist and treated as one outside the cultural norms. It has taken a hundred years to move from that approach to Christians celebrating the value of all humankind, even of an atheist.

And using the word atheism suggests that someone has actually nailed their colours to the mast - chosen to believe that there is no God. Actually, in my experience, most people don’t choose to trust or not trust, like that. Most people are willing not to think about it at all, and if pushed will side with an insurance position that there may be a God, particularly when someone dies. The alternative of oblivion is not palatable.

So what is the church about now, what is its task. Not flogging Hell, attendance, judgment, norms of behaviour but persuading others that trusting in God to get the whole picture, to take humanity to a better world, to forgive and forget is the natural position of humankind, and that comes with an inner peace.

It is no wonder that the favourite hymns are Make me a channel of your peace, Be still for the presence of the Lord, Amazing grace, How great thou art… all of them are focused on a deep spiritual joy. We know, absolutely know, that for a person to be well their physical, mental and spiritual health need to be well. Physical health has been prime and only recently has mental health been much more than putting people away in asylums – it happened to my grandmother. Spiritual health is the third dimension, ignorable but critical. Being in communion with God is the natural position, the healthy position in life. Jesus describes it as an abundance.

‘Where are you’ says God to Adam and Eve. Nothing is forced.