

## Thought For the day: Palm Sunday 2020



Misquoting Kipling, the maker of exceedingly good quotes, someone once said: 'If you can keep your head whilst others are losing theirs, then, my friend, you just don't understand the gravity of the situation!!'

Well the gravity of the situation is upon us and yesterday was a day of some turmoil for me, a frustrating day as like others I tried to operate from home whilst the coronavirus threatens. So much didn't quite go to plan. Are you having days like that?

I wrestled for a while with some technology, I phoned people who were not in, I dealt with a tricky employment issue, engaged in a conference call, heard about two dear people who are unwell, managed just 30 minutes gardening and only a short walk. It was an unsatisfactory day followed by a restless night of frustrating dreams and wakefulness.

These days of confinement are tough and we don't like being confined to barracks, restricted, curtailed, and under pressure. It is good to know that diamonds only emerge from intense pressure and history is studded with people who have emerged from pressure and confinement to greater things and a lasting impact.

John Donne the 17<sup>th</sup> century poet led a naughty life until imprisoned but he then turned to Jesus and went on to be the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral and his sermons were listened to by thousands. Nelson Mandela was incarcerated on Robben Island for 27 years but from that confinement came the rebirth of a nation. 'Four walls doth not a prison make nor iron bars a cage,' it seems.

There is something about confinement that **can** bring a flowering. Only with the deep pressure of the rocks can the diamonds emerge.

This Palm Sunday we remember Jesus entering the most troubled place in the world. It is a place of struggle, conflict and confrontation. It had a history of killing any prophets, fighting wars, and living in violence. It was a place of pressure and **turmoil**. And Jesus entered into it arriving in humility to a people who were in touching distance of a Saviour if they did but know it.

The most troubled place in the world is not a geographic location, it's not Jerusalem. The human heart is the most troubled place in our world. It was 2,000 years ago and it is now.

There is turmoil in world events and we experience it in our own lives. It's in the fear and uncertainty for our future, the loss of things we thought were secure, financial security, relationships, and this very disease that interrupts life's plans. Each of us could name and describe our angle on the personal turmoil which affects us at the moment.

Turmoil challenges our beliefs and faith, confronts the way we have always done things, makes us question where we are going. It shakes us up. It also gives us the opportunity of realigning ourselves.

Jesus is entering Jerusalem, the heart of a people, challenging their identity. We too can be that city which Jesus enters. He comes to our confused and shaken lives. He offers us hope and a new order that we can trust. He can give us our true identity. He invites us to reach out from the crowd and receive His peace and understanding, his love and our salvation.

Christ Jesus is at work. Many have sensed that there is so much that is good in this shake up of our patterns of behaviour and that God seems to be using the time to bring us to better ways. Families are together more. Neighbours are loving neighbours. We value the key workers. Spring is in sharper focus. We contact precious ones. There is something beautiful about the extra time many of us have been given each day.

The turmoil of the streets on Palm Sunday points to the deeper mystery of Jesus' identity. He is **here** amongst us. He is the man amongst the turmoil, life-giving and God-revealing. In the turmoil he calls our life into alignment with God's life. His entry into Jerusalem inaugurates a Holy Week of turmoil; realigning our relationships and teaching us the intimacy of washing feet, calling us to die to old ways, and breaking open our lives to a flowering in ways we never expected or thought possible. The turmoil Jesus brings is the chaos out of which new life will be born on Easter Sunday.

As John Donne wrote so we say:

*Batter my heart, three-personed God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, overthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.*

**Rev. Nigel Washington**

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020