

Thought for the Day – Thursday 2nd July 2020

We have just started our journey through the month of July. A time when many are looking forward to (or perhaps have taken already) their summer holiday. Schools and colleges are ending, many workplaces are “easing down” to the quiet time in the mid year and taking a break before we all leap back on to the treadmill of our life come September. Normally, that’s what we’d mostly be about.

This year will be different and maybe many future years too. Schools, work, travel, and every other aspect of life have all been disrupted and turned topsy-turvy through one of the tiniest of Gods creation – a microscopic virus that has laid low countless scores of people, some it has proved fatal for, and has ridden rough-shod through our established way of life and society. Leaving many of us feeling bemused, hurt, angry, scared, frustrated.... The list goes on and on. But the strange thing is that the virus doesn’t know it’s having that effect! It has no grand plan to disrupt civilisation as we know it. It doesn’t even know we exist but is focused on simply replicating whenever it can.

Oddly enough, one can also consider mankind is virtually indistinguishable from the virus when you look at us in comparison the planet and the universe. On those scales, each of us is relatively microscopic too and what is the primary genetic imperative built into mankind ... to survive and replicate.

I’m not suggesting for one minute there should be an outpouring of empathy, kindness, and caring for the virus – that would make no sense for our view of the universe and our place in it, but we should stop from time to time and consider that we are made to exist in the universe and not the universe being made so that we can exist. We hope we can co-exist and we can thrive – but there is no point standing on at the side of a volcanic lava flow, or on a beach in front of a tidal wave, or in the countryside in a hurricane or blizzard and railing at these things to get them to try and see our viewpoint. That activity is as pointless as Canute trying to turn back the tide.

Faced with these forces of nature, mankind does what it always seems to have done which is to find a way to change, defeat, or deflect whatever it is that will disrupt our passage through existence. We forecast weather, we build dams and breakwaters, we research for ways to overcome illness or other potential failings of the human body – with the same tenacity as the Covid 19 virus finding ways to manage its host environment and keep replicate. Hopefully we're not as mindless in that pursuit at the virus but when you look at the impact we've had on the planet sometimes you have to wonder.

Today's readings are about Gods promise of help and healing (Isaiah 57) and that in order to be a true disciple of Jesus we need to understand that we are in fact the servants of all those around us (John 13). How do these relate to our world today? God makes it clear through Isaiah speaking to the people of his time that He is not just for the rich but for everyone, that irrespective of your station in life if you behave as he has asked with love and kindness to those around us, then he will help us through life and bring healing through peace – but if you choose another path he won't be there. He is saying in a less obvious manner that he is our servant as long as we also act as servants to each other.

This is also part of what Jesus was trying to explain when he washed the disciples feet as related in John. The act of foot washing was not to make one cleaner, ones normal daily ablutions did that. But after a day of work or travel, ones feet were dirty and dusty and it wasn't right that you should track all that into your house or anyone elses'. It was the job of a servant of slave in many households to perform this most menial of tasks. The high priest had to go through many ritual purifications and bathing before entering the Holy of Holies to stand in Gods presence. But God is everywhere and we need to be ever mindful that we are in his presence. Jesus states that the master is not higher than the servant nor the messenger than the one who them and thus his disciples should ever be humble about their life and mission and be like a servant to those they take the New Commandment to.

Thus, we need to understand and keep in mind, that our role is really that of a servant to those around us now. Whether that is in acting like a family member, a friend, or a helper. We need to put ego aside and put the other

person first. In the coming months and years as we try to get our lives back to some sustainable framework, we need to balance the needs of those around us and not simply focus and getting back to how things were. That's not service as it is putting us first and a servant cannot do that. We've all had to re-think our lives and will have to re-invent how we want them to be in the changed world around us. God and His Son, Jesus, will show us the way if we but listen to them. Funny though to think that it is this all kicked off because of one of Gods microscopic creations which doesn't even know we exist!

May God's blessing surround you

And love fill your hearts

May Christ walk beside you

And never depart

Holy Spirit keep you faithful

And strong to the end

As the stars light your pathway

Sweet blessings descend. Amen