

Thought for the day... and the day after and maybe the day after that !

It seems to have been a long time since we had the restrictions of the lockdown imposed upon us as the seriousness of this pandemic became a reality. If memory serves me well (which it might not of course) we were warned first of all about keeping our distance and not shaking hands and the importance of washing our hands. I remember a Sunday morning in church when we were bumping elbows and thinking it quite a joke and wondering where it was going to lead and if the government were telling us the right thing or if they had perhaps gone over the top a little !

Here we are on the other side of 'the peak', we hope. We have lived through an enforced isolation and heavy restrictions on our personal liberties; 'Social Distancing' has been the key phrase that has been drummed into us. When we have gone to the shops or for a walk to get some exercise we have been ever mindful of those words. We have felt the challenge of those who do not seem to keep to the new social rules and norms that we are adopting and we see ourselves behaving differently when we go out. We still find ourselves engaging as much as we can, be it at a safe distance talking to neighbours or up close to a screen as we 'Zoom' with friends and family or join in the weekly house group meeting. After all we are social creatures; it was God who said "it is not good for man to be alone."

Now that there is change in the air I wonder how we are feeling? There is the hope of being able to do more as restrictions are relaxed and the government is slowly and carefully trying to move us back towards some sort of normality. We are beginning to be more expectant about life returning to what it was, though that still feels to be a long way off. The watchword though will still be 'Social Distance'.

My thought today though is that really this is not something new to us is it ? Like many I have practised social distancing for a long time. There are people who I avoid, parts of society I don't want to think about. There are places I don't want to go because of the situation and culture I would find myself in, so I don't. I practise social distancing. After all, I do not have to interact with those I don't want to; I can live in my own world without being contaminated by what I consider to be undesirable. Even as a Christian it seems I still fall into this pattern of behaviour whilst still claiming that the gospel is for all.

I was reminded again during house group on Monday evening how hard it is to do the things that Jesus did. He touched the untouchable, met with the undesirable, spoke to the unapproachable. He was accused of eating and drinking with sinners and outcasts. I am reminded of Jesus words in Luke chapter 12; *"He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.*

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

It's not the only place that Jesus speaks about our social attitudes and the way in which we distance ourselves from others. The sermon on the mount is always a challenge as are the people Jesus encounters. Perhaps I need to think about the future and my attitude to those who I find it difficult to be with. Perhaps also as 'church' this is an opportunity for us to consider our witness in the community and ask ourselves if we really do reflect the love of Jesus and His Kingdom values in Kettering.

Are we going to go back to just doing and being the same once our buildings are open again or are we going to take this opportunity to be different ?

I'll leave you with the words of the song that is going through my mind these days, I'm sure you know it:

Have you seen the old man in the closed down market
Kicking up the papers with his worn out shoes?
In his eyes you see no pride, hand held loosely by his side
Yesterday's paper telling yesterday's news
So how can you tell me you're lonely
And say for you that the sun doesn't shine?
Oh, let me take you by the hand and lead you through the streets of London
I'll show you something to make you change your mind

Have you seen the old girl who walks the streets of London?
Dirt in her hair and her clothes in rags?
She's no time for talkin', she keeps right on walkin'
Carrying her home in two carrier bags
So how can you tell me you're lonely
And say for you that the sun doesn't shine?
Oh, let me take you by the hand and lead you through the streets of London
I'll show you something to make you change your mind

In the all night café at a quarter past eleven
Same old man sitting there on his own
Looking at the world over the rim of his teacup
Each tea lasts an hour then he wanders home alone
So how can you tell me you're lonely
And say for you that the sun doesn't shine?
Oh, let me take you by the hand and lead you through the streets of London
I'll show you something to make you change your mind

Have you seen the old man outside the seaman's mission?
Memory fading with the medal ribbons that he wears?
In our winter city the rain cries a little pity
For one more forgotten hero and a world that doesn't care
Oh, how can you tell me you're lonely
And say for you that the sun doesn't shine?
Oh, let me take you by the hand and lead you through the streets of London
I'll show you something to make you change your mind

Source: [Musixmatch](#) Songwriters: Ralph Mc Tell
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