

Hindsight or Foresight

How often do we say or think to ourselves 'with the benefit of hindsight I would have done that/said something/ reacted differently'.

Some of you may know that I enjoy walking and that I regularly meet up with a couple of long-standing friends to do a substantive walk – at the moment we are walking the Cornish section of the SW Coast Path. And at the moment I am suffering from the benefit of hindsight! You see the last walk I did with my friends was before the Covid 19 had really taken a grip and there were no measures in place – life was in a different place.... But, it wasn't the best of walks – we started late because I had a work commitment to attend to, we did have a lovely coffee and snack in a café but from there on things did not go according to plan and quite frankly I soon became grumpy – Having set off my dog escaped and it took me 15 minutes to get her back- she thought we were playing on the beach I wanted to walk! Then having walked the first mile we found a notice saying this section of the path was closed and that we had to go back the way we had come and make a long diversion (why wasn't there a notice in the car park!!!) ; back on track it started to rain – really rain, there was mud, and steep sleepy hills, fields of sheep to walk round the edge of and to top it all off we got lost at the end of the walk and couldn't find the car left there in the morning with not a thought of where we were just quickly getting into my friends car to take us all to the start of the walk. It was not the best walkI was definitely grumpy at times..... But with the benefit of hindsight I now know it was the last such walk I'll have for some time, I now wish I had enjoyed the whole experience a bit more – even through the rain there were glorious views, and the company as always was excellent – I wish I'd known it would be the last such walk I'd have for some time I would not have been so grumpy and I would have relished the time spent in the fresh air with good friends.

We have the benefit of hindsight when we consider the wonderful bible reading this morning – Jesus' entry into Jerusalem - Triumphant Procession. We know what comes next and it is very hard not to let that influence our reaction to hearing this story.

Over last three years I been accompanying groups through the Ignatian exercises – part of which is to practice imaginative contemplation on particular bible passages and one of which is this passage. A frequent comment from participants is that they find it really hard to imagine themselves into this story because they know what's coming next – you see they have the benefit of hindsight.

I wonder what the disciples and friends of Jesus felt after the crucifixion when they thought back to that day when they had brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus before he entered Jerusalem to jubilant shouts, and the waving of palm branches? Do you think they may have had some regrets about their reactions on that day?

However, although the disciples didn't have the benefit of hindsight they had been given some foresight – its just that they didn't always recognise it or indeed heed it – they couldn't understand the predictions that Jesus made.....and even though Jesus' request that they went to get the donkey so clearly pointed to scripture, because in Zechariah we find this:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

And in the same way the psalm set for today also seems to predict the events of Palm Sunday:

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.*

*The Lord is God,
and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.*

And that same psalm seems to predict what happens next:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone. Verse 22*

A text that Jesus himself quotes in all 3 synoptic gospels.

In addition we see in all the gospels that Jesus many times predicts his suffering and death.

But the disciples didn't get it, they didn't want to hear it or believe it.

But in pointing to scriptures that would have been familiar to any good Jew Jesus was trying to teach them, to warn them what would happen and why it had to be in that way. I believe Jesus is showing how all this was the fulfilling of scripture, and he is pointing them to why and what would follow.

I wonder what the disciples and friends of Jesus felt after the crucifixion when they thought about the triumphal entry into Jerusalem – I wonder if they were able to see it as a fulfilment of scripture – well I think clearly, they did. But probably much later as they sat and reflected on all those events and all that Jesus had said to them – in other words with the benefit of hindsight.

So how does this help us today – let's use scripture to help us too – we can learn what sort of a King Jesus is – humble – he comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, even knowing (as he certainly did) that he was going to his death – he willingly went there, he was a servant King, a King who loved, laughed, cared, healed, had compassion, wept..... He is trustworthy, strong and he has saved us.

A month ago who had the foresight to see where we would be today? – maybe a few people who understood how viruses work and can spread - but mostly we could not imagine where we find ourselves today, how it would feel to be isolated, locked down, churches shutBut let's have the foresight to help in this crisis those in need, whether its as a volunteer, a community comforter, or a prayer worrier.....to act responsibly to protect the vulnerable and our NHS

Let's look to scripture to remind ourselves that we have Jesus, who understands absolutely what isolation feels like, how isolated must he have felt as he was abandoned, arrested, tortured..... We know we have a God who understands what it is to suffer, to mourn and to weep.....and that he is there to comfort and strengthen us in all things.

Lets not look back with hindsight on this time and say to ourselves 'if only'.....

Lets pray: