

LETTER FROM SIMON

In a way it seems something of a waste of time to write this clergy letter. I say this because the point of this type of communication is surely at least in part to connect with and comment on what is happening in the world, and offer some sort of theological angle or insight on events – and yet day by day things are changing so quickly, so I run the risk of being (even more than usual!!!) irrelevant!

However to think in these terms would be a mistake because actually there is so much going on in the world that needs our distinctly Christian, long term perspective – for example the Black Lives Matter Campaign, the Climate Crisis, the issue of modern slavery (it is estimated upwards of 40 million people are enduring some form of servitude), the inequalities in our country that the pandemic has exposed and so on and so on.

And yet, important as these are, there is one issue that I think bears talking about as a matter of urgency – and that is the ongoing and widespread assault on one of our most precious commodities, namely truth. We see this assault in

- the almost daily denials of governments concerning their motives, actions and objectives – hence, for example, the Chinese deny any mistreatment of the Uighur Muslims while the president of Belarus thought little of rigging the vote in his favour in recent elections.
- the actions of our multinational corporations who, for example, do their utmost to avoid paying the taxes that they owe, exploiting loopholes that were never intended, and in how they make claims about packaging being ‘Widely recyclable’, knowing full well that this is not the same as ‘widely recycled’ with the aim of persuading the consumer that they are more eco-friendly than they are.
- media selectivism and sensationalism, and the distorting of truth in order to sell copy (and the social media companies are doing the same in a different way often with our connivance).

the claims of politicians around the world – Donald Trump is perhaps the most shameless exponent of this art, but he is far from alone, as the • claims made in our own Brexit campaign bear witness, as indeed does much of political history.

- The activities of ruthless scammers who seek to cheat people out of their money by any and all means.

The bottom line is that the pursuit of power, wealth and self-interest causes us human beings at every level to disregard truth whenever and however it suits us.

So how do we as Christians respond to this sorry state of affairs – after all, even collectively we are a very small player, and individually we inevitably feel that we are powerless.

Well, there is a very simple answer based on the fact that we know we have a God who is passionate about truth and even claims to embody it (John 14:6), namely that we need to be willing to be a prophetic voice speaking out against this assault on truth, by supporting organisations such as ‘Stop the Traffik’ as it fights to halt modern slavery, or adding our voice to the Black Lives Matter campaign, or by calling out false claims that we see on social media. As our new Archbishop Stephen Cottrell recently said, we need to be willing to speak into our national life with our Christian values, to be part of the conversation that shapes the future, even willing to be seen as troublemakers stirring things up if we have to.

The temptation is to keep our heads down, to go with the flow – but that is not our calling – our calling, to change the image, is to take the narrow road rather than the broad, or, to change it yet again, to be salt and light in a world that truly does need seasoning and light, that really does need to hear the truth we possess.

To walk this road will take courage and resilience, but let us walk it with confidence, with boldness, with strength, because of God's promise to be with us as we do so.

With every blessing

Simon

www.blacklivesmatter.com/what-matters-2020/

www.stophetraffik.org