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Was Jesus Always Right?

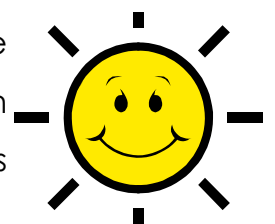
One of the things that frustrated me during the recent general election campaign was the simplistic viewpoints of the different parties and candidates, both in placing the blame for our economic and social problems and the solutions they offered. It's all the fault of Gordon Brown, the EU, Migrants, the bankers, the English, the Scots, etc.; all we have to do is increase public spending, decrease welfare spending, shut the doors to foreigners, come out of the EU, get rid of the English, get rid of the Scots, etc.

I would have been willing to vote for any candidate who had said, "Actually it's very complicated. There was no one cause for our problems and there is certainly no simple solution." But no candidate was ever going to stand up and say that. Generally people do not like complicated. We want simple

solutions and certainties, even though we know they are a lie.

Back at the start of the so-called War on Terror, George W Bush had the very simple yardstick for judging people, "if you're not with us you're against us." Simple as this statement is it did not do justice to the complexities of international politics. And look where his simplistic partitioning has got us today. Things are never that clear cut. The days of being able to judge whether a cowboy is a goodie or a baddie by the colour of his hat have long gone. People are complex, like economics, and subtle complexities make life awkward. No one is 100% wrong or 100% right. Not even me!

Of course we do like to categorise people as Good or Bad. The general consensus about Adolf Hitler is that he was bad, very BAD. However, I have no doubt that he must have had some positive qualities. Martin Luther King Jr is



rightly regarded as one of the greatest 'Good' people of the 21 Century. However, researching for my recent sermon on him I discovered that he cheated in writing his PhD thesis. And, thinking of British politics, Margaret Thatcher is for some a saint who did no wrong but for others a villain who did no right. The truth is she got some things right and some things wrong. We are all sometimes right and sometimes wrong, sometimes good and sometimes bad.

This idea raises an awkward question. Was Jesus always right? If we accept that even the best of people are sometimes wrong and make mistakes, where does that leave our thinking about Jesus? Underlying the way Christians read the Bible stories about Jesus and the way preachers preach about Jesus is the idea that he was always right. But was he? And is the idea that he was always right a sign of faith in Jesus or, a sign of our desire for over simplistic judgements about people?

We have no direct record of what he said and thought, only the words of his followers, and it is most likely that Mark is the only Gospel writer who actually met Jesus the man, and he was just a small child at the time. So, how accurate are the words and stories we have? But even given that these writers wanted to show Jesus in the best possible light there are some striking problems in the words attributed to him.

There is a story about Jesus talking with his followers when his family came to visit (Matt.12:46-50). Jesus dismisses them by saying those who do what he says are his true family. Nice for those who try to do what he said but a bit harsh on his mother and brothers. In another story he curses a fig tree for not bearing fruit (Mark 11:12-14). It seems to me to be a bit out of proportion, especially when you realise the time of year this incident took place was not the season for figs. When talking about the faith of children Jesus said "if someone causes a child to lose faith it would be better for that person to have a millstone tied round their neck and they be drowned

in the sea" (Matt.18:6). That seems a bit extreme by any standard. And then there's his statement about coming back in the clouds (Mark 13:24-27). Has the world not got bad enough yet? Is this simply a metaphor? Or was Jesus just plain wrong?

It is comforting to live in a world of certainties and simplicities. It is comforting to believe that Jesus was always right. It is uncomfortable to accept that reality is complex. For me one of the great challenges of being a follower of Jesus is to try and work out when the words of Jesus are good to follow and when they might be less than good advice. This can be hard work, but a faith that accepts the complexities of life, and the inadequacies of simple solutions, even ones put into the mouth of Jesus, seems to me to be much more relevant in our complex world than a faith that says, 'believe this and don't think about it.' What do you think?

Nick Skelding

Visit to Baitul Amn Mosque

The ladies of the Baitul Amn Mosque invited women to join them at Baitul Amn Mosque for a meeting to discuss peace and to demonstrate that Islam is not a threat.

There is a lot of misunderstanding about Islam. The media blasts us with its radical side, the evil men who take the name of a religion to carry out atrocities on their fellow men. The ladies set out to make everyone aware of the concepts and beliefs that are contained in their religion.

Within the mosque area, there were displays showing quotes from the Qu'ran that demonstrated the tenets that Muslims should live by. So much of the Qu'ran is allied to our Christian beliefs, and based in our scriptures, but, as within Christianity, many interpretations are put on the words.

IS choose to put glory on the idea of the murder of people by suicide bombers, but we read words from the Qu'ran which damned suicide and

murder as evil acts, where there was no heavenly reward to be gained.

The main aim of the meeting was to bring together people of different religions and to help foster understanding and this was eloquently assisted by the speakers, one of them being Rev Helen Watson. Other speakers included Shabina Ahmad who is a Police Constable in the Metropolitan Police working especially with Women's groups in London, Dr Sadia Ayaz who is a GP and a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association and Ms Marion Ingeson Heart, who has been working at the Hillingdon Women's Centre since 2012.

There was opportunity to eat with and speak to other invitees from a myriad of backgrounds and there is no better way than to know people as individuals, rather than as a religious group.

There are radical groups within any religion, men (and women) who are selective in their use and interpretation of religious texts to pervert vulnerable

minds. Understanding religions matter in order to prevent hatred through ignorance. This conversation should continue to ensure that peace can be achieved sooner rather than later.

Doreen Smith & Joy Barrow

No-one Knows All The Truth (though some think they do!)

I think that Joy Barrow and Doreen Smith (see previous article) were right to say that "understanding religions matters in order to prevent hatred through ignorance"

But it isn't just in Islam that intolerant sentiments are heard. Consider some of the comments made by priests in urging the Irish to vote against same-sex marriage (the Irish voted for it). Consider some of the things said by Northern Irish Protestants against their Catholic neighbours. There are Christian bookshops that refuse to stock Christian authors of whom they disapprove. In a recent issue of the Parish Magazine a writer composed a

prayer which included a reference to 'false religions'. I think she meant all those that don't accord with that taught in her own Uxbridge church. I bet mine would have got on to her list!!

In a thinking church congregation there is bound to be a range of opinion. We don't all see Jesus of Nazareth in the same way. We don't all read the Bible in the same way. We don't always use or value prayer in the same way. While one is inspired and uplifted by a service/sermon, others find it irrelevant or unacceptable. However, there are churches where toeing the party line is essential for membership. Deviation invites expulsion!

Our religious faith is probably an accident of birth. Born in a Bedouin community in Morocco or Sinai we would almost certainly be Muslims. Born in an Indian Bihari village our faith would be form of Hinduism. Born into a Russian family we would almost certainly be worshipping in an Orthodox church. To pretend that

we what we presently believe is right and that all the rest is 'false religion' is plainly silly.

We all need to be accepting. If someone believes that Noah actually built and filled an ark, or that Jonah spent three days inside a whale or that the Nativity stories in Matthew and Luke are actual history, that is well and good. If someone else does not, that is well and good too.

There is always room for robust conversation. But we can agree to disagree. There is surely no room for a narrow, exclusive mindset that says "if you do not believe as I believe, then you do not believe"!

Howard Cooper

Boys' Brigade News

In 1983, The Boys' Brigade celebrated its Centenary. There were celebrations and commemorations throughout the BB world.

In the Hillingdon Battalion (as it then was) one idea was to **“Plant a tree for '83”**. The father of one of our Company's Boys at the time had a foundry, so our Boys set the wording for a plaque and metal castings were made for Companies to set beside their tree/s.

Our Company planted two trees. One in the Christ Church garden on Redford Way, near to the car-park entrance, and another in Fasnidge Park.

Over the years the tree at Christ Church declined, leaving the plaque. Then it was discovered that the plaque in Fasnidge Park had been damaged, so the one from Christ Church was moved to replace it - which left Christ Church with no Centenary tree, no plaque and BB staff wishing something could be done to replace both – but, how to get another plaque?

Then, a miracle! In the depths of High Wycombe a hobby engineer

scrap metal which he'd purchased. He passed it to a friend whom he knew had BB connections. That friend knew our present Battalion Secretary and 'phoned him. (God moves in mysterious ways). The plaque was identified as one installed in Barra Hall Park, Hayes by the 4th Hillingdon Company. They had realised some time ago that it had disappeared from the park, but had no knowledge of what had happened to it. It seems now that it was removed with other metal in a refurbishment scheme.

They very kindly agreed that before they re-instate it we could make a copy, so Raghav (our Senior Section) has made a mould and a casting in resin. We now have a replacement plaque! Our plan now is to plant a replacement tree/shrub and reinstate the plaque (with an update), in our Church gardens. Only 31 years late!

We are grateful that the church has given us a small plot of garden, (the raised bed just by the back

entrance to Christ Church) and have given us the go ahead to fix the plaque to the wall. James and Tyler, from our company section have now prepared the plot of ground ready and a few plants have been planted to make a start in making it look presentable. Keep watching!

We have now fixed a date of **Sunday 12th July**, our last Church Parade of the session. After the service we will parade around to the back of the Church where we will have a short 'Tree Planting Ceremony', and of course, after the service we invite all those who are able to come along and join us.

Thank you for your support.

Paul Edgeworth

Hillingdon Street Angels AGM

Dear Friends

I am writing to invite you to join us at the Hillingdon Street Angels café

style AGM on Monday 22nd June, 7.30pm, at Waterloo Road Church. Refreshments will be available from 7.15pm

Hillingdon Street Angels is a joint churches initiative, supported by the Metropolitan Police and LBH, which was launched in October 2009. Our primary role is to serve the local community through a caring service to listen to, care for and offer appropriate assistance to those who are out late in the town. Concerns they face may be associated with homelessness, intoxication, drug abuse, assault or other issues. Through our friendly presence, we seek to provide appropriate support and, where possible, to prevent disruptions in the town. Our teams are out on Fridays and Saturdays in Uxbridge Town Centre between 10pm and 4am.

Our AGM will offer the opportunity to hear more about the difference that Street Angels have been making in Uxbridge, to explore our

future vision together and to raise questions.

We are also delighted that Paul Blakey, the Director of CNI (Christian Nightlife Initiatives) Network will be speaking at the AGM. During the past 20 years around 130 groups working within the night-time economy have been set up which together help over 2000 people every week who are facing danger, injury or vulnerability – and Hillingdon Street Angels is of course one such group. CNI provides support, networking opportunities and a voice for such groups and we are delighted that Paul Blakey will be sharing something of the wider perspective of what is going on round the country with us during the AGM.

June Hughman

Chair Hillingdon Street Angels

From the archives

The following article appeared in the June 2003 issue of Look.

2003 - The tercentenary of John Wesley's birth

2003 is the tercentenary of John Wesley's birth. Many events are planned for the commemoration and one of the largest will be in Manchester, with the University's Dept of Religion combining with the Rylands library to put on a four day event, June 15th – 18th. The Rylands Library is home to the Methodist Archives, the largest and most impressive collection of Wesley material in the world, and consulted daily by scholars from all over the world. There will also be a special service to mark the occasion in Lincoln Cathedral on Sunday 29th. Although John Wesley was born on June 17th, because of the change in our calendars in 1752 (when 11 days were removed) the date by the present calendar is June 28th.

John Wesley was born in his Epworth rectory home, Lincolnshire, on June 17th 1703. The fifteenth of nineteen children, ten of whom survived infancy, he was brought up in a home of love, learning and

education. His mother, Susannah Wesley, began her children's education on their 5th birthdays and they were expected to learn the alphabet perfectly on the first day!

Her methods clearly worked for the three sons all left their mother's school prepared to continue their classical studies at two of England's most prestigious public schools; Samuel and Charles (the hymn writer) at Westminster and John at Charterhouse School.

John's journey took him from Charterhouse to Christ Church, Oxford, where he was ordained a clergyman of the Church of England and elected Fellow of Lincoln College. He was an Oxford tutor for ten years, after which he and his brother Charles ministered to both the colonists and the native Indians in Georgia in America.

Back home in England, both John and Charles experienced evangelical conversions over the Whitsun weekend in 1738. During

the next six months they preached the gospel of the new birth almost daily in Anglican churches in the London area. Their insistence on the need for personal conversion and that converts could know their sins forgiven by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit resulted in the churches being closed to them. It was then, with the support and example of another fervent Anglican preacher, George Whitefield, that their open air preaching began. For fifty-one and a half years, John Wesley rode the highways and byways of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, preaching the gospel on more than 45,000 occasions! It has been estimated that he travelled, mostly on horseback, more than one third of a million miles, travelling and preaching in all weathers. When he died in 1791 he left behind him more than 100,000 Methodist converts in his societies in Britain and America.

Well that's John Wesley's life and ministry summarised in 300 words! Like most of us, John Wesley loved

the place where he was born and across his fifty years of itinerant ministry, he managed to get back to Epworth almost every year and nearly always on his birthday!

In his final years he reminisced about what he called 'the little country town which I still love beyond most places in the world'. On his 82nd birthday he wrote in his famous journal at Epsworth: 'I find myself just as strong to labour as I was forty years ago. I do not impute this to second causes but to the Sovereign Lord of all.'

Four years later he wrote in Epworth "What cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, as for bodily blessings also." And he was there again in 1790 spending his last birthday, as he had spent his first, in his beloved Epworth. Eighty seven years earlier he had been in the rectory and that home had given him both a classical education and the foundations of his Christian faith. Although he did not know it then the world was to be his parish. The Psalmist spoke of Zion (Jerusalem) as being

remembered because "this and that man was born in her" (Ps. 87). And this Lincolnshire town of Epworth has become immortalised in Church History as the home of the Wesleys, and especially because John and his brother Charles, arguably England's greatest evangelist and greatest hymn

-writer, were born there!
Herbert McGonigle

Churches Prayer Diary

w/c 7th June - North Harrow Methodist

w/c 14th June - North Hillingdon Methodist

w/c 21st June - Northwood Methodist

w/c 28th June - Pinner Methodist

Look-In

Please help us to produce an interesting newsletter by handing in news items or articles to the office, or emailing to Louise George (publicity@christchurchuxbridge.org.uk). The next issue will be a summer issue, and cover both July and August and the deadline for the next issue is 26th June.

Church Calendar

All events are at Christ Church unless indicated by an X in the final column

Date	Event	Group	Leader	
June				
Tue 2	Tuesday Club	Church	Wendy Pollard	
Wed 3	Church Council	Church		
Sat 6	Saturday morning coffee	Oak Tree	Lucia Franca	
Mon 8	Pub lunch	Church	Rosemary Moere	X
Tue 9	Tuesday Club	Church	Wendy Pollard	
Thu 11	Craft group	Church	Doreen Smith	
Sat 13	Saturday morning coffee	Hillingdon WI	Celia Callard	
Sun 14	Sunday lunch	Church	Lucia Franca	
	Church Parade	BB/GB		
Tue 16	Tuesday club	Church	Wendy Pollard	
Sat 20	Saturday morning coffee	Mencap	Dot Bryant	
	District Sports	GB	Stephanie Marr	X
Sun 21	Prayer meeting	Church		
Tue 23	Tuesday Club	Church	Wendy Pollard	
	Worship planning group	Church	Peter King	
Thu 25	Craft group	Church	Doreen Smith	
Sat 27	Saturday coffee morning			
Sat27- Su28	London BB 24 Event	BB	Paul Edgeworth	X
Sun 28	District Church Parade	GB	Stephanie Marr	
Sun 28	CTU AGM & Barbeque	CTU		X
Tue 30	Tuesday Club	Church	Wendy Pollard	
July				
Sat 4	Saturday morning coffee	Boys Brigade	Paul Edgeworth	
	Annual Display BB & GB	BB & GB	Paul Edgeworth Stephanie Marr	
Sun 5	Members meeting	Church		

WHO'S

Christ Church
Redford Way
Uxbridge
UB8 1SZ
01895 258956

Registered charity
no. 1139255

Ministry team:
Rev'd Nicholas
Skelding
Deacon Jackie
Fowler

Administrator
Martin Vowles
01895 258956

Contacts via office for:

Brigades:
Girls' -
Stephanie Marr
Boys' -
Paul Edgeworth

Junior Church
Club -
Jenny Peet

Tuesday Club -
Wendy Pollard

Prayer Tree -
Val Bailey
Rosemary Moere

WHO!

June Services

(All services are 11am unless stated otherwise)

- 7th Rev'd Nick Skelding (Holy Communion)
14th Deacon Jackie Fowler (All Age Worship)
21st Mary Carpenter (URC lay preacher)
28th Deacon Jackie Fowler

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(See Matthew 7:13-14)

06-16-2014

THERE IS A STRAIGHT AND WIDE. THERE
IS A CURVY AND NARROW. I HAVE NO
IDEA HOW TO PROCEED.

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