

St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick

The Thought for the Week

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020

John Lennon would have turned 80 last week.

Whether you consider him talented and inspirational or controversial and rude, chances are you recognise his name.

When he was murdered in 1980, I believe that the world was robbed of one of the greatest songwriters.

Those of us of a certain vintage will recall the Beatles' meteoric rise to fame, literally overnight, in the 60s. As a teenager, I can remember watching them on television on Saturday evenings on "Thank your lucky stars" alongside artistes like Helen Shapiro, Adam Faith, The Seekers and Cilla Black! It was essential viewing!

The Beatles' sound was new and exciting and heralded a completely new era of pop music. Beatlemania broke out everywhere.

The four Beatles were mobbed wherever they went, girls hysterical the minute they caught sight of John, Paul, George or Ringo, and their songs rocketed to the top of the hit parade, and, of course, those young guys from Liverpool became immensely rich.

I am sure that the adulation they received was really too much for them – human beings were not meant to be treated as gods as we don't have the equipment to handle divinity.

And inevitably, they broke up and went their separate ways. The adulations, the massive material success, the stress and the strain of constantly living in the limelight, surrounded by the media on every side, proved too much.

Each of them then, in their own ways, began to search for some form of reality.

At various stages in his life since his Sunday School days in the local Anglican Church, Lennon was fascinated by religion, and at this point he turned to Eastern Mysticism for a better world.

Of course, he did some very odd things, odd, that is to other people.

But why, he argued, couldn't there be peace in the world?

Why couldn't the world's hungry be fed?

Why couldn't we know something of heaven here on earth?

And was there indeed anything in all the world more important than love?

And so he wrote, "Imagine" in 1972. It remains his most successful solo song, having sold 1.7 million copies in the UK alone.

And who can forget the dreamy video for “Imagine” with Lennon, sitting at his white grand piano in the huge white room at Tittenhurst, light gradually pouring in as Yoko Ono opens the shutters?

You will remember some of the lyrics, I am sure.

“You may say that I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one; I hope someday you will join us, and the world will be as one.”

Dreaming of, imagining a better world.

Now, for all that this song has been hailed as an atheistic anthem, its words are not far from reflecting orthodox Christian truths as might be thought.

I would suggest that the lyrics parallel visions of “the world to come” in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and in the creeds of the Church.

The core imperative in the song is simply to imagine a better world – one without countries, and thus one in which there is nothing to fight or die for, one without hunger, greed, private possessions, or anything that might come between us, as a human family – a world without religion! Wow!

Is he dreaming perhaps of what the Book of the Revelation calls “The New Jerusalem”?

And he wasn’t the only one.

Dr Martin Luther King had a dream of a world where black and white, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic would join hands in peaceful coexistence.

John F Kennedy hoped for the age to dawn, “in which the strong are just and the weak are secure and the peace preserved.”

Poets and prophets, politician and peacemakers have longed dreamed of a world where peace would flow like a river.

They have imagined a heaven upon earth where each lives for the other, and all live for God.

Imagination is God-given.

Quite different from fantasy – fantasy is living in a world of make-believe. It is playing a game, a form of escapism.

But imagination is a creative force that is inherent in everyone.

So often we hear the children say, “There’s nothing to do. I’m bored” And Mum pipes up, “Use your imagination!”

Imagining it, seeing it in your mind, is the first step to making it a reality.

Goethe, the German poet, once said, “Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it!”

And maybe Walt Disney said it best, “If you can dream it, you can do it!!”

Jesus was a dreamer – He used His imagination to paint a picture of a world men and women would live in peace, a world where love was pre-eminent, where no one went without, where there were no man made walls and barriers, the world which God intended and which man, in his arrogance and sinfulness, has marred by his passion for war and greed and hatred.

Yes, John Lennon, is a flawed icon, yet his moving song is cry from the heart for a better and happier world.

But dreaming of a better world is not enough.

Imagination of itself is not enough.

The world will not just get by singing fine lyrics and thinking noble thoughts.

We must do something to make it come about.

For you and me, and for millions of others, that means following Jesus Christ, doing things His way, giving our imagination and our dreams to Him.

Yes, the world needs dreamers!

You and I have the imagination and the dreams and the vision of how to bring about God's Kingdom.

Every time a displaced person, who is fleeing persecution at home, finds support here and people who will share their fight for justice, we move a step closer.

Every time someone who is loaded with guilt about who they are, comes to understand that they are loved by God for who they are, we move a step closer.

Every time someone enriches another's life by forming a simple friendship, by sitting with them, by being a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on, we move a step closer.

Every time a loving relationship forms between two people, every time we give generously to some appeal, some cause, some need, we move a step closer to our Christian dreams and visions of God's Kingdom here amongst us.

Imagine that!

The Revd Fraser R Aitken

Locum Minister.