

# Thought for the Day 17-23 May 2021

## by Jenny Mutch

As we start to emerge from lockdown, I thought I would share a few reflections, starting from pre- lockdown, during it, and looking to the future.

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup>**

### **The Good Samaritan**

In the October before lockdown, Forbes and I went to France. Never being one to sit down, a cycling holiday was booked. My aim was to cycle as far we could; Forbes' was to get to Chateauneuf de Pape for a sampling session (OK, I wasn't adverse to that either). The cycling was fantastic, through vineyards and a trip to where Van Gough painted his sunflowers. We cycled through incredible countryside without seeing a soul and then... in the middle of nowhere, my bike got a puncture!



We opened our tool kit to be presented with a bicycle pump that had seen better days and plastic toy-like tyre levers that were not really up to the job. We then became aware of a young man on this empty road also fixing his bike.

He finished and came to offer help. He seemed to realise I was not one to be beaten by a technical setback so calmly handed me the tools I needed and waited till the bike was fixed. He then told me he had cycled across Europe from Germany (1,000s of miles) and had not had a puncture till then. He smiled, said goodbye, and when we turned round to wave and say thank you, he was gone. We were convinced that this young man was sent as a Good Samaritan or Guardian Angel.

Help us to remember to act as a Good Samaritan and to recognise what is needed where and when and, as Hebrews 12:2 reminds us, *'Don't forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels'*. What an incredible thought!

## **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>**

### **Answering prayer**

At Women on Wednesday (WOW, as we call it), we have been studying prayer using an online prayer course (it's very good, by the way). It's been an interesting journey. What should we pray for, when and how? We've discussed everything, from praying for world equality to finding parking spaces (apparently, the latter can work).

I rarely pray for myself. However, a few weeks ago, everything got too much: lockdown, juggling a heavy workload and other family issues. I woke up in the night. I was angry, upset and lost. I needed help! I very vocally asked and prayed for it! I don't think Forbes got much sleep. The next morning, I felt more at peace. I looked at my phone to find messages from friends; asking how I was, suggesting meeting up or going for a walk. Now, if that is not an answer to prayer, I don't know what is.



At WOW, we explored a different approach to prayer: the story of Bertha. For 20 years she prayed that her husband, the pagan King Ethelbert, would convert to Christianity. She never gave up. Eventually, he converted and others followed and she was sainted for her role in the establishment of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. An incredible example of trusting that her prayers would be answered.

I often forget that God sees the whole picture. Complex prayers may take longer to be answered, whilst others can be answered quickly.

*'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.'* (Matthew 7:7)

Perhaps we shouldn't be afraid to ask more often, seek more widely and listen more carefully to the answers when we knock on the door.

## **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>**

### **Love your neighbour**

Our neighbours have been amazing throughout lockdown. I can honestly say we have looked out for each other, through shopping, entertaining WhatsApp chats, social distancing pavement get-togethers and sharing of sour dough yeast that grew to gigantic proportions.



A few months ago, however, we had a boundary dispute. I'm sure many of us have been there – who owns the boundary and what should be there? We wanted a hedge for wildlife; our neighbours wanted a very tall fence: we both wanted privacy. At the time, we had more important things on our mind and, as a result, a stalemate ensued for some weeks. We thought about it and, although not convinced it was our sole responsibility, we tried to put ourselves in our neighbour's position. It wasn't easy but, eventually, we sent a message and offered to meet at the end of the garden.

All we needed were holsters, cowboy hats, boots and some tension-building music and we could have been shooting a scene at the High Corral: OK, my imagination is on overdrive, but you get the idea. We talked, even joked with our neighbours, and agreed a plan. We

have an acceptably high, albeit temporary, fence until we can grow a hedge. Maybe neither of us have got exactly what we want but we are still on good terms.

*'Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all you mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it: love thy neighbour as thyself.'* (Matthew 22:37-39)

## Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>

### The Big Issue

It's official – I have put on weight during lockdown. The answer to this, in Jenny's world, is to allow herself to be persuaded to run her first 'virtual' London Marathon in October. There is nothing very 'virtual' about this by the way: it just means I don't have to run it in London. Of course, doing this requires discipline of the mind, the body, the soul and what I eat. If you read my last Thoughts for the Day, I mentioned that I love cheese, and I still do, so losing weight



is going to require a lot of discipline! Secretly though (don't tell anyone), I am quite excited about the marathon challenge, albeit also apprehensive.

I thought the words I found from Layne Beachley (a professional surfer) summed things up really nicely: *'If you are doing what you love then you're doing what is right. Desire and passion resonate with your body, mind and soul. When*

*you're passionate you don't question, judge, criticise, second-guess, or doubt. It's that passion that will fuel the fire to overcome challenges.'*

Each day brings its challenges. The word tends to conjure up negative images and feelings. And yet the beauty of life should really be to embrace challenge, as without it we can't grow and understand what is right for us and those around us.

*'For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you".'* (Isaiah 41:13). This is the perfect reminder that we don't need to face life's challenges alone.

By the way, Claire Gee (if you know her from St Andrew's) is taking up the marathon challenge with me. Thank you, Claire!

## Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>

### Don't worry, be happy

I tend to be a worrier. When people come to visit, I want them to feel 'at home', but achieving this requires preparation. As lockdown



eases, I am looking forward to inviting friends and family to stay. But, as my daughter reminded me, the mattress in the spare room is 'way past its best'.

I looked for a replacement online (COVID preventing shop-based mattress testing). If you have every tried to buy a mattress this way, it

is a minefield. All mattresses are advertised as the 'Best Mattress in the World' and engineered for the 'Ultimate Sleep', with coils, air pockets, multi-comfort layers and even titanium aérocoils. I was losing sleep worrying about the options and the right choice.

Eventually I settled on a brand, still worrying if it would be OK. Following its arrival, we heaved the new mattress upstairs and

dragged the old one down ready for disposal. In trepidation, I opened the box to be presented with the strapline, 'Don't worry, be sleepy'. What a clever marketing ploy. Of course, it made me smile and hum the Bob Marely tune, 'Don't worry, be happy'.

Bob goes on to tell us that:

*'In your life, expect some trouble.*

*But when you worry*

*You make it double.'*

How true! I didn't need to worry. The mattress is great.

Matthew 6, v31 -33 (paraphrased) tells us we don't need to worry about what will we eat, drink, wear or, in my case, what mattress to buy, since our heavenly Father knows what we need. Instead, we should seek his kingdom and righteousness, and all the other things will be given to us. I think I need to write this on a notice and hang it above my desk!

## **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

### **Small beginnings**

During lockdown, many things previously taken for granted came to a halt: freedom to travel or simply pop to the shops have been compromised. How many of you have left your mask at home and had to retrack? Picking up a mask is not part of our normal routine.



In our household, we try not to waste resources and think carefully about where our bought food originates. But, before lockdown with a busy work schedule and travelling to London each day, our default food shopping routine was one of convenience: one supermarket and less thought to what we bought, justified by 'too tired' or 'just this once'! Lockdown has

given us the space to rethink. Our food shopping routine has changed.

We no longer shop in one place. We think more carefully about what we buy, searching out seasonal fruit and vegetables, not minding if it doesn't look perfect (we embrace the odd bit of sand in our celery or nibbled winter greens). We use the local market and shops where we can. Food shopping is now interesting and, dare I say it, exciting. It is no longer a chore.

This new routine has had additional unexpected benefits including time to interact with people. We know some store owners by name and share jokes and short stories. It allowed us to stop and better think about those around us with less focus on our own worries. The benefits reaped are immeasurable. What started out as a simple shopping routine change, has grown into something much more rewarding. We will continue with our new approach to shopping long after lockdown.

*'Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.'* (Philippians 2:4)

## **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>**

### **Celebrations**

I am sure we all love celebrations! I know I do. Any excuse for a party (hosting or being invited) and I'm there!

During lockdown, celebrating milestone events has been restricted. I had one such event (a certain decadal birthday). I had planned it all – a big party for friends and family – but it wasn't to be. Instead, Forbes and I went for a walk and then had a joint family quiz and cocktail-making session via Zoom. It wasn't what was planned, but I had a great time.

Last weekend, we stayed in Shropshire with one of my oldest friends and her husband: I hadn't seen them for nearly two years. They



own a smallholding with a cottage attached to the main house, making our visit possible under the current regulations.

The joy of seeing them, wandering around fields, patting the dogs and the sheep (yes, the sheep!) and just spending time with some fantastic company was just what Forbes and

I needed! We celebrated my birthday with them retrospectively, and anticipated my friend's (who has a similar decadal birthday celebration soon).

We walked to the top of the Wrekin and were all very thankful for the time we spent together. It was a great reminder of the simple pleasures of just living, talking and laughing (we did a lot of that). We had time to think and celebrate life.

We pray for many more celebrations as we slowly start to unlock our world whilst pausing to remind ourselves that, *'We should be glad and thank the Lord for he has done great things for us'* (edited from Psalm 126:3). Another reminder I need to write down and hang above my desk!