

Revd Stephen's reflection: 12th June 2020

Change!.....Change!!.....CHANGE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

There's always change going on somewhere in the world. But since Coronavirus took off there have been massive changes, especially with lockdown. And now, as the UK is gently exploring ways to release some of the lockdown rules as safely for our health as possible, there will be a series of changes.

Now some change is good to keep us paying attention and stop us getting bored, but adjusting to a series of significant changes can get quite tiring, as many of us will have discovered. So where does God come into all this? As I was reflecting on this the other day, I remembered a story I was told many years ago, one I would like to share with you now.

The story was about was an American preacher, who I will call Kenneth. He was a popular speaker at big Christian events and was much in demand. However, the USA is a very big country, and travelling around a lot often meant flying, so he learned to fly, and, having qualified as a pilot, bought a small plane of his own to use.

One day he got into his plane to fly to a new venue. He gave his flight plan to Air Traffic Control, did his preflight checks, got the OK from the control tower to take off, which he then did. He was told what course to take and at what altitude once he was in the air.

A little later, he was given a different course to take and to climb to a higher altitude. So he did that. Then he was given another course change. He started to do that, when God chipped in.

"Kenneth", said God, "Why did you do that?"

"Because Control told me to."

The conversation went on a bit further, but basically, God was saying that Control had access to information about other planes flying in the locality, and changing weather patterns which Kenneth wouldn't be able to pick up from his limited instruments in his plane. So it was necessary that Air Traffic Control guided him at times so he didn't have an accident or get lost.

The point of the story was that God was wanting Kenneth to know that there were some people who assumed because God had asked them to do a particular job, He wanted them to stay in that job for ever, and that was not always right. Sometimes he had more advanced plans for them which they weren't hearing because of a mistaken assumption.

Later, I remembered I had experienced something similar myself a few years before, when I was part of a team escorting a very ill man from Alice Springs to Darwin in a small two engine plane. It was a VERY rough trip because the thunderstorms that are often around Darwin were particularly bad that night. The pilot showed me the thunderstorms on the cockpit radar and how he was having to keep changing course to avoid the worst of them.

Then when I was asked to write this Reflection in the light of the new changes and adjustments as the UK feels its way cautiously out of lockdown, two verses from Proverbs (chapter 3 verses 5 and 6) came to mind:

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (NRSV)*

Flying round other aircraft or thunderstorms won't always be a ruler-straight course, which is why the traditional King James Version translation of *"and He will direct your paths."* is a better meaning-for-meaning translation into English.

It helps me to remember that God loves ALL of us, and has the best interests of ALL of us at heart at ALL times. So I can take my worries to Jesus, tell Him about them, listen to anything I recognise as a reply, and leave as many worries as I can with Him.

Sometimes I need to do it repeatedly - some storms go on longer than others. Meanwhile, I keep on with the rest of my life the best I can. If you are not doing that already, you might like to explore doing it too.