

Thought for the Day 7 July 2020 from Jan Betts (All Hallows)

Judges 14 Luke 18 1-14

I wonder if you have been feeling 'I can't do this any more'? This second phase of lockdown, when we realise that this pandemic isn't going to go away and that the 'new normal' is very different to anything we have known, is really getting to many of us. It's hard to live with the fear, the isolation, and sometimes the sheer effort of every day making risk assessments about what is and isn't safe to do.

Today's reading from Luke has a story about a woman who must often have felt 'I can't do this any more'. She wanted justice, we don't know what for, but she was obviously pretty desperate. She was also probably with friends who said to her 'oh give up, you won't get anywhere with that judge, he admits publicly that he just doesn't care about anyone but himself.' But she believed passionately that she deserved justice and just carried on.

She didn't give up. She was so convinced that she had right on her side that she went on pestering the judge, shaming him in public (and shaming herself, as she probably became a figure of fun and contempt) and gave him what the literal translation says is 'a black eye'.

This story is set in the context of Jesus talking about the Son of Man coming again, and ends by him asking if there will be any faithful people on earth when that happens. One way of reading this story is about just faithfully pressing on when we see injustice, irrespective of how others may see us, laugh at us, or say 'you'll never get anywhere'. If we believe, as Jesus says here, that God is a loving God who cares supremely for justice in the world, we will go on trying to give the unjust a shaming 'black eye'.

Whether the injustice which we are passionate about is Black Lives Matter, the fighting of food poverty at RainbowJunktion Café, one of my dearly held initiatives The Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East, (<https://frme.org/>) or any other of the many cases and causes of injustice, this is what we are called to be patiently, shamelessly, publicly and passionately persistent about. Why not share one of those causes dear to you with someone today who may not know about it? We can do so much even if we only have the internet, the phone, our wallets and our conviction that God cares for all lives.

I confess I sometimes do need lots of encouragement to hang on to persistence. Among other places where I have found words when I have no words are the Iona Community website (<https://iona.org.uk/>) and the Northumbria Community website (<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/>.) Again you may have something which sustains your persistent connection and relationship with a just and merciful God in uncertain times which you could share with others. Be shameless – tell them about it!

And once again I am indebted to Paul Magnall for sharing this brilliant inspiring link about all faiths worshipping persistently. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jul/03/keeping-the-faith-religion-in-the-uk-amid-coronavirus>