

We are surrounded by Peter's way of thinking: the week-end papers are full of it: better ways to sleep, to keep fit, to enjoy life- where to go for a holiday, what to watch or read or eat and so on. Anything to distract us from the reality of life lived towards death and anodyne in comparison, ways of avoiding the truth of our situation as created human beings called to be a 'new creation', that is, not something remade by us but remade by another. All such nostrums in our daily news feeds contain some good but not the good, not the God, who ultimately re-shapes us. Jeremiah and Jesus take up a cross not because this is necessarily what they want to do but because it's where their call leads them, it's what happens when they are true to their vocation. No-one in their right senses would want to go through all the misery that afflicted Jeremiah in his ministry or the suffering of Christ at his end, but there's a greater end in sight which compels them both to speak and act in ways that the world sees as foolish, that goes against the perennial temptation to sleepwalk through life in the hope that 'things' will get better, at least for oneself. And there's the clue to it all, for sin is essentially selfish, self-centred, a desire for the self to remain 'in control'- a denial that we are created beings, that we never have been in control, that God is our ultimate good.

A contemplative take has something of this nature of letting reality speak before we obscure it with our own needs and desires. It's one of my hesitations about some forms of re-wilding when we engineer what we envisage as best for the landscape – re-introducing storks for example ,planting trees. We never then know what might have happened if we just let the landscape alone. But time is short and the water rises and we have to do something, one hears, and I'm reminded of Peter's desire to build a tent for the Lord on the holy mountain. He still doesn't get it, he still doesn't understand that it's God not ourselves who is in charge here, who is re-creating the world or better reclaiming it for God. So much re-wilding is I fear an attempt to avoid this deeper truth, that is, the need to remake not only this or that bit of the landscape but for a total conversion of life where the rich no longer get richer but respond to the needs of the poor, not least their own poverty of spirit, where justice and peace prevail because we end this mad dash to extinction caused by our love of being in control – the false hope that technology for example can save us. It's too late for that – but not for love of neighbour.

*What then will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?*

As Paul so clearly sees- we have not only ourselves to blame but only ourselves to offer

*'think of God's mercy and worship him I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind'*

Do this and God will surprise you, may even provide a way out from our present predicaments. The rest is 'greenwashing'.

Br John Mayhead

Monastery of Christ Our Saviour