

Trump is gaining ground, so it seems is Putin. There are echoes here of the 1930's. Brother Herbert said he'd never felt such a sense of dis-ease since his time in Germany just before war broke out – a sense that the forces of darkness are on the move and the light is fading. This may seem overly dramatic but that is one of the issues: the lack of awareness or belief that anything like this could be happening at all, and indeed the frightening ability of demagogues to speak untruth to a gullible audience and get away with it, and also the frightening ability for human beings not only to believe lies but to revel in untruth, not to care whether something is true or not. Nicodemus at least is prepared to investigate. He comes to the light out of his own darkness and seemingly soon returns to this darkness as he can make neither head nor tail of what Jesus is talking about and is used here as a symbol of those who do not yet see, still misunderstand. But it's sown a seed that will bear fruit later. This should give us hope that speaking truth to weakness, often under the guise of power, still needs to be done. We are speaking here of the power of the Holy Spirit, to work away at us even when all seems lost, to cultivate in us a way of seeing which will lead us to the truth of the world as a vehicle of God's love, as a means of attaining heaven rather than hell. Easily said and easily subverted even by our own Christian rhetoric which often, even here in John's gospel, can portray the world as a world of darkness to be escaped from as soon as possible. But that is not the rhetoric of today's particular gospel passage and we need to keep it in mind when other forces are at work.

“For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world but that through him the world might be saved.”

. Yes God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son.

This is the world portrayed as sacrament, to be lived in sacramentally thinly veiling God. We heard it yesterday in the hymn by George Herbert

“A man that looks on glass

On it may stay his eye;

Or if he pleaseth through it pass

And then the heaven espy.

.....

A servant with this clause

Makes drudgery divine;

Who sweeps a room as for thy laws

Makes that and the action fine.

Henry David Thoreau, the nineteenth century American sometime recluse, expressed this in terms of 'living deliberately', that is in all simplicity, and allowing the otherness of the natural world, or perhaps better the world as it naturally is, to speak to us *“We must look for a long time before we can see”*, he says. Before, that is, we can see Cyrus or the serpent or the Cross as sacrament too. Before we can understand the double-play that is at work throughout John's gospel where being raised up on a cross is a symbol of triumph, of exaltation, of glory and gives us hope that the world has meaning after all. The Jerusalem we go up to is here and now if only we have eyes to see. We are that temple: Gods work of art.

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