

Wednesday 15th July

John 7:37-52

Rivers of Living Water

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." ' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Division among the People

When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, 'This is really the prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' But some asked, 'Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?' So there was a division in the crowd because of him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The Unbelief of Those in Authority

Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why did you not arrest him?' The police answered, 'Never has anyone spoken like this!' Then the Pharisees replied, 'Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.' Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'

'Why did you not arrest him?' The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!"

A few days ago Anita and I were watching an old episode of Spooks where the police were in the streets trying to police a protest gathering where those in authority had planted people to stir up trouble within the crowds. Commands were being shouted to shoot and then to ceasefire as there was a realisation of the stirring up of the protestors for the benefit of the "authorities".

So often we see police involved with crowd control. Even in recent days and weeks we have seen protests and police reactions in our country and others abroad. I often wonder how the individual police officer reacts in a situation where he or she would support the cause of the protester.

In many areas of society the role a person starts doing within a "career" is vastly different to the one they are now fulfilling. The image of the Village Bobby from the 1950's and 60's is very different to the police we see in our community today.

The medical professionals have seen a huge change in their work and roles in recent days and enormous changes since the setting up of the NHS 72 years ago. Our fire service is now a Fire and Rescue Service primarily dealing with rescues more than putting out fires.

Even the role of the Methodist Minister has changed. When I left college the way that people could contact me was by letter, knocking on the Manse door or phoning the house – I did have an answerphone to help – and that was it. Now communication comes more by email; when I leave the home my smart-phone is with me and emails and other messages catch up with me very quickly. On a day off the minister is rarely out of reach unless she or he leaves the phone at home. Computers are in every study and in recent days we have had to become used to online meetings and trying to keep up to date with procedures around re-opening Church premises. In years gone by to re-open a church was due to a building project and it was a time of great celebration; now it is in a time of pandemic when we can find ourselves more concerned for worshippers health safety than their spiritual well being.

Is my role about spiritual growth or about physical well being? Over the last few months my intention has been to try and provide some spiritual support through reflections on the Scriptures I hope and pray that if I have achieved little else I have achieved that. As we move forward into the next "normal" I pray that the spiritual well-being of people is uppermost in my role.