

A few words from the Vicar

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.' (Matthew 5:14-16)

On a Bury bound tram (standing room only) returning home after a meeting in Manchester (and desperately wondering what I could write about for the June magazine) I couldn't help but think that a tram journey is a little like our journey of life.

Life as a journey is a metaphor that's often used so I think I'm on safe ground here. Indeed, the 'Pastoral Introduction' to the Baptism service uses the same metaphor to mark the beginning of our new life in Christ:

'Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love.'

So, what about my tram metaphor?

Like any journey travelling by tram has a beginning and an end – we're born and we die – and like life, our tram journeys don't last long:

*'As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.'* (Psalm 103:15-16)

But in between our beginning and our ending, life is there to be lived in its fullness. And, as you travel on a tram, if you look around, you will see human life in all its fullness being lived: male and female, young and old and every age in between. You will see people engaged in their work, some chatting, some deep in thought, the young and in love, those going out to enjoy themselves. Then there are the lonely, the sad, the worried and the dejected.

And is not the trust we place in those who work on the trams (the driver, the control staff, the technicians etc.) to ensure we safely arrive at our destination a metaphor for the trust we place in God; that He is in control of this world we inhabit and if we trust in Jesus he will ensure we, at our life's journey's end, will arrive safely at our eternal destination (Romans 10:9-13).

Just as there are times when we must wait upon God (Psalm 27:14), there are times when our tram journey pauses as we wait for a signal to change.

Just as things go wrong whenever we ignore God's standards and stray from the path He sets before us (Matthew 7:13-14), a tram jumping the tracks has the potential for disaster. But, of course, just like the engineers who get things going again, God can get us back on track (Psalm 23:3 & 119:105, Proverbs 3:6 & 4:11).

Just as sin (ours or the sin of others) intrudes and impacts upon our lives (Romans 3:23), it can also intrude during our tram journey. For example, there are the inconsiderate and those who are inebriated and noisy.

Just as God's love touches the lives of others through those random acts of kindness we perform as we travel through life (Matthew 5:14-16), it's not unusual to witness random acts of kindness on the tram network. Like the young man I witnessed (as I was thinking about this article) on my journey to Radcliffe who gave up his seat to an elderly gentleman who had boarded the tram.

And that got me thinking. I know this isn't an original thought but wouldn't the world be a much better place if everyone, every day performed random acts of kindness; not just for their family and friends but for complete strangers.

You know the sort of thing: give up your seat on bus, tram or train to someone who needs it; smile at the harassed shop assistant; be polite, even with those who annoy you; open doors for others; buy a 'Big Issue'. The list is endless and I'm sure you can think of many, many more examples!

As Christians, if we are serious about being disciples of Christ, we ought to act upon our calling to be God's love in this world. So, let's get to work with those random acts of kindness!

As for my tram metaphor, you can only stretch such imagery so far before it becomes meaningless – before you hit the buffers - so I think I'll quit while I'm ahead!

Every Blessing

Dave