

**ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
GRAFHAM**

'THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK'

3rd March 2021

'to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable'

Many of us will have heard this phrase in connection with the role of the Church or Christianity as a whole but I wonder how many of us know that it was originally used in connection with the role of newspapers and the press! It came to mind again after I quoted Mark Twain's remark, 'It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand' in my sermon last Sunday. And this in turn led me back to a prayer attributed to the Elizabethan seafarer, Sir Francis Drake. I don't think that it much matters whether or not Drake actually wrote it but the attribution has probably ensured its survival. Anyway the language seems appropriate to the man who first circumnavigated the globe. Inevitably the prayer appears in many different versions. Here it is in one of the simpler forms:

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wilder seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.

Many of our prayers ask for help or reassurance and it is quite tempting to pray for a quiet life. After all, who wants to be disturbed? Yet that is what we are asking if we pray this prayer. It's a dangerous prayer - who knows where we may find ourselves going; what assumptions may be challenged. It seems to me a good prayer for Lent as we reflect on the nature of our discipleship. Can we afford not to pray it?

I think that it works on many levels and is appropriate for us as individuals and as a church. Our vision of God is always too narrow, there is always something more; something beyond the horizon. It is when we have the courage to let go, to move away from what is known that we can reach out to him more fully. In John 10:10 Jesus says that he came that we may have life and have it abundantly. Abundantly, not just adequately. If we are to discover that abundance for ourselves, then we need to grow and to be stretched; to push beyond the boundaries of the tried and tested, of what is known and safe. In words attributed to Christopher Columbus which accord with the spirit of Drake's prayer, 'you can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore'. We need to be disturbed in our attitudes and patterns of

behaviour. If we commit ourselves to the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, of the coming of God's Kingdom, then we have to commit ourselves to working with God for that future. It's going to challenge us. It's going to disturb us. Maybe we need to ask first for the desire or the courage to pray this prayer. But there is a promise there too - losing sight of land we shall find the stars. And that is exciting.

With my love and prayers

Camilla

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