

Thought for the Month

Go Gently into this Good Lent

I saw a wonderful film recently that I want to share with you. It's the latest Tom Hanks film. It tells the true story of a famous American children's presenter called Mr Rogers whose show 'A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood' ran from 1968 to 2001 and was beloved by generations. The show encouraged children (and grownups) to talk and think about their feelings. In the film a hard-bitten journalist, famous for tearing popular figures to shreds in his writing, comes to see Mr Rogers and plans to write a mocking review of him. But he was utterly disarmed by Rogers' sweetness, idealism and wisdom. He wrote 'What is grace? I'm not certain; all I know is that my heart felt like a spike, and then, in that room, it opened and felt like an umbrella'.

Mr Rogers affirms all he meets. He tells people that they are great, just the way they are and of course he talks about love. How we are all loved into being. Have you ever stopped to think about all the people who have loved you into being? It is an immensely powerful thought.

Mr Rogers was passionate about public service broadcasting. About teaching children (and grown-ups) positive ways to be. It is probably no coincidence that he was also a Presbyterian minister and that faith permeates what he does and shines love and acceptance on all he meets. He totally and utterly values all the people he meets.

I hope you can see this film. It was one of the most joyous films I have ever watched. My soul felt better for watching it.

We are entering Lent and it often feel like a strict, guilty time when we are encouraged to be gloomy, give things up and endure until Easter Day. After the difficulties of the last 2 years, I would like instead us to have a gentle Lent. Perhaps we take on something good to do for other people. Perhaps we simply decide to pray more.

So what I want to leave you with is Mr Rogers' message. That you are a wonderful person, just the way you are and you have been loved into being, not just by those who have loved you, but also, I would add, by God. This Lent we are preparing to celebrate that love of God by what happened on Easter Day.

Do have a beautiful day in our neighbourhood.

Prayer for the end

O God,

Who would fold both heaven and earth

in a single peace:

Let the design of thy great love

lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows:

and give peace to thy Church,

peace among nations,

peace in our dwellings,

and peace in our hearts:

through thy Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

(Eric Milner-White, 1884-1963)