

JENGA JESUS – Fun and Games outside the Jerusalem Temple

Sunday, November 18, 2018

St. Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops BC

The Very Rev. Ken Gray

The game JENGA is set in place on a music stand at the front of the church or chapel. As I play with the blocks, I read some verses from the following:

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MARK - 13:1-8

As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

IMPENDING CHAOS IN THE FACE OF HUGE PERMANENCE

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, **when will this be**, and **what will be the sign** that all these things are about to be accomplished?"

THE RUMOUR MILL

When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. **This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.**"

IF IN DOUBT (or anxiety) SING

ALL WILL BE WELL

Of that day and hour,
no one on earth can know,
Not even the angels, or the Son:
We cannot be sure,
if the day will be swift or be slow,
But we can be certain that it will come.

ALL WILL BE WELL, ALL WILL BE WELL,
AND ALL MANNER OF THINGS SHALL BE WELL.

And there will be signs,
in the sun and the moon and the stars,
Distress in the heavens and the seas;
Then lift up your eyes, -
Look up! Your salvation is near,
This is not your death;
it's the birthcry of peace.

ALL WILL BE WELL, ALL WILL BE WELL,
AND ALL MANNER OF THINGS SHALL BE WELL.

Like a child in the womb
resisting the onslaught of life,
We struggle to hold to what we now see;
Our prayers are but groans,
and we fear there's a terrible price,
But it's our new creation coming to be.

ALL WILL BE WELL, ALL WILL BE WELL,
AND ALL MANNER OF THINGS SHALL BE WELL.

WEDNESDAY, OH WEDNESDAY

This week's **bible study conversation** was all about birthcry, birthpangs and the birthing experience, something I thankfully know nothing about as a male by-stander. I do know that in other life circumstances, **transitions can be brutal**. Ask anyone who engages deeply with twelve-step programmes. So here's a question: If God suffered in the person of Jesus on the cross, **does God suffer** in other ways? Think about it, while we turn to a historical, mystical figure.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416) is known to us almost only through her book, **The Revelations of Divine Love**, which is widely acknowledged as one of the great classics of the spiritual life. She is thought to have been the first woman to write a book in English which has survived.

Her name is taken from **St. Julian's Church in Norwich** where she lived as an anchoress for most of her life. We know that Julian was known as a spiritual counsellor. People would come to her cell in Norwich (which Kathie and I recently visited) to seek advice. Considering that, at the time, the citizens of Norwich suffered from plague and poverty, as well as a famine, she must have counselled a lot of people in pain. Yet, her writings are suffused with hope and trust in God's goodness.

Julian's Revelations of Divine Love is based on **a series of sixteen visions she received on the 8th of May 1373**. Julian was lying on, what was thought at the time, to be her deathbed when suddenly she saw Christ bleeding in front of her. **She received insight into his sufferings and his love for us**. Julian's message remains one of hope and trust in God, whose compassionate love is always given to us . . . Julian did not perceive God as blaming or judging us, but as enfolding us in love.

Famously, Julian used women's experience of motherhood to explore how God loves us, referring to Jesus as our Mother.

A SAMPLE OR TWO

Our life in this world consists of a wondrous mixture of good and bad. We contain within us both our risen Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the misery and woe of Adam's sin. Protected by Christ, although dying, we are touched by his grace and **raised to hope** of salvation.

AND

For just as our bodies are clothed in garments
our flesh enclosed by our skin,
our bones wrapped in flesh,
our hearts centered in our body;
so are we, **spirit and flesh,**
clothed head to toe in the goodness of God.

BACK TO JENGA

and to **the quilt which hangs in my office**, a multi-coloured geometric design built out of squares, circles and quadrants of circles, in deep blue, brown, green and yellow colours. It's titled CHAOS AND CONTROL which does two things for me personally. One it celebrates my love of the slapstick humour of Don Adams and the sixties television programme Get Smart. And secondly, seriously, it is a metaphor for Church life which at times is terribly messy and chaotic.

For me **the collapse of the Jenga blocks** embodies the experience of Jesus' disciples and others. A way of life centred on temple worship is about to change, dramatically and drastically. **Fear is everywhere**, not only of the Romans, but of change and uncertainty.

BUT all shall be well according to Julian, who shares not an explanation of *how* things can and will be, but a vision of **what a new heaven and a new earth look like**.

Such a vision **can become real** for each and every one of us, in time, with patience and in community. It can become more than a simple platitude. For this transformation to occur, something needs to change in *us*, or *our environment*, in *our community*, or *in God*?

My God help us each in the next stage of our spiritual journey. Amen.