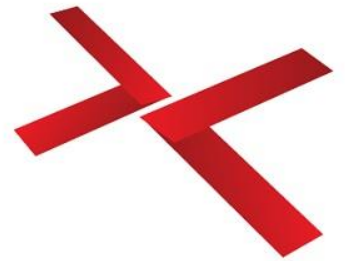


CHRIST CHURCH CHRONICLE

AUTUMN 2018



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO HUMPTY DUMPTY?

by Rev'd Mark O'Donoghue

Dear friends,

In *Through the Looking Glass* by Rev'd Charles L. Dodgson, known by his pseudonym, Lewis Carroll, Alice complains that the argumentative egg, Humpty Dumpty has used 'glory' to mean "a nice knock-down argument" when it is not what the word means. Humpty Dumpty's reply has become famous as an illustration of the difficulty of finding meaning in a post-modern world.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words means so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.'

Gospel is often treated as an *elastic* term, capable of different definition, like Humpty Dumpty above. Indeed, there appear to be an almost bewildering array of gospels on offer in the 21st century. Three such so-called gospels dominate the church scene at present.

- First, the gospel of social justice, whose advocates argue that the imperatives of the gospel are not simply repent and believe but the relief of social, economic and political inequality.
- Second, the gospel of inclusion, which claims that there are no backgrounds, beliefs or behaviours that could exclude anyone from the kingdom, appears to be sweeping all before it at present.
- Third, the gospel of unity is also proving popular. It declares that the gospel brings people together and so equates unity with the gospel and considers anything that separates people to be anti-gospel.

How do we evaluate these different gospels? What should we celebrate and question in each when we subject them to the teaching of the scriptures?

- Much of the gospel of social justice seems worthy. Aren't we called to love neighbours as ourselves and isn't faith without works of compassion dead (Mark 12.31; James 2.15)? However, this version conflates the consequences of the gospel for Christians with the content of the gospel and also confuses what we can expect of life now and life in the new creation. We should want to do what we can in the face of cruelty, deprivation and injustice. And yet, the Bible stirs hope in us as we long for a day when all wrongs are put right, all tyranny overthrown and every tear wiped away. We look *forward* to the day when pain and suffering give way to incomparable glory (Romans 8.18).
- The gospel of inclusion picks up the New Testament emphasis that the gospel crosses many barriers, meaning anyone with any background who comes in repentance and faith can be welcomed and included in the blessings first promised to Israel. However, this is not the same as *everyone*. The gospel excludes those who, tragically, will not turn and trust in Christ and at the end of scripture, the heavenly city is portrayed as excluding murderers, idolaters, the sexually immoral and those who love falsehood (Mark 4.11-12; Matt 25.41-46; Revelation 22.15).
- The Bible calls unity between Christians precious, calls us to maintain it and condemns divisiveness (Psalm 133.1; John 17.20-23; Eph 4.3; Titus 3.10-11). But, sadly, the gospel of unity doesn't simply value unity; it defines the gospel in terms of unity. No matter how far we may think someone has drifted from the apostolic gospel or how serious we consider the consequences may be for them or for others, we are told that unity is more important. We don't need a PhD in philosophy to spot the flaws in this approach. Unity is an incomplete predicate; it begs the question 'unity in what?' The Bible says we should aim for 'unity in the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God' (Eph 4.13). Like the gospel of social justice, this one confuses the content of the gospel with a critical consequence of the gospel. Unity between Jew and Gentile Christians was a vital outcome of the gospel but the gospel is about what God has done in Christ to save both Jews and Gentiles.

So, if these so-called give us cause for concern, what *is* the gospel as the New Testament presents it? Let's consider three key aspects.

First, the gospel is God's message. So, the Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Romans by describing himself as 'set apart for the gospel of God'.

- The gospel is not our message but God's message to us. It is not a human theological construct or the product of our thoughtful reflection on who God is or what God has done. As God's message, we cannot take any credit for it and nor should we be ashamed of it. We have no right to redefine it or to tamper with it. Instead, we must pass on what we have received, without addition or dilution.
- But it is also a message to be heard by Jesus' disciples, responded to in obedience and then proclaimed to others. Jesus speaks to those with 'ears to hear' and his disciples repeatedly hear the call to listen, hear and believe (Mark 4.1-20; cf. Romans 10.14-17).
- And the gospel is also a message to be proclaimed to the whole world (Matt 24.14). It is a message that comforts and challenges, reminds and gives hope, transforms lives and turns the world upside down. Acts reminds us that the gospel was proclaimed by Peter and John in Jerusalem, Philip and others in Judea and Samaria, and Paul, Barnabas et al to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8, cf. Acts 8.25, 40; 14.7).
- The gospel is not something we *do* as much as it is something we listen to humbly, respond to obediently and proclaim to others urgently.

Second, the gospel is God's message concerning his Son. So, the Apostle Paul declares that the heart of this message from God is what God has to say about his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1.3).

- Given this, it is no surprise when we see the New Testament refer to the gospel as 'the gospel of Christ' (Romans 15.19; 2 Corinthians 9:3; Galatians 1:6; Philippians 1:27).
- That means that the gospel is not primarily a message about the church, although what we learn about Christ has a huge impact on the church. Nor is it primarily a message about humanity, although what is said about Jesus helps us to understand God's view of us and our future.
- The gospel is God's message to us about Jesus – who he is and what he has done. That means that we cannot avoid talking about him if we want to talk about the gospel or, as a good friend puts it, we cannot avoid 'banging on about Christ' if we want to talk about Christianity.

Third, the gospel is God's message concerning his Son and the salvation he has won for us. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, his first reference to the 'gospel' was to 'the gospel of our salvation' (Ephesians 1.13). And in Romans 1.16, Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is God's power 'for salvation to everyone who believes'.

- We must not omit salvation from our gospel proclamation, because the Jesus we proclaim is both Lord and Saviour. As his disciples reminded people in Jerusalem, 'there is salvation in no-one else for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved' (Acts 4.12).
- But what are we saved *from*? The gospel brings salvation from sin, death and judgement. Jesus makes the forgiveness of sins his priority (Mark 2.5, 17) and is able to forgive even the most sinful people (e.g. Luke 7.36-50). Christ's death on the cross for sinners not only achieves our forgiveness but also frees us from death and God's wrath (Romans 5.6-11; cf. Acts 17.30-31; 1 Thess 1.5, 9-10). Indeed, all other issues, such as social disintegration, economic deprivation and ecological chaos pale in comparison to facing the justified anger and deserved judgement of the holy God. The great news of the gospel is that we can be saved from God's wrath to come, a point repeated so often in the NT that we cannot avoid it (cf. Matt 3.7; John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 5:9; Eph 2:3; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 1:10; Rev 6:16 etc).
- And what are we saved *for*? Well, hearing the gospel and responding to it by repentance and faith, i.e. by turning and trusting in Christ, brings the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit's help to live the Christian life and the real hope of eternal life. It is like living a new life (John 3.1-8) in an entirely new context, where Christ is Lord (Romans 6.5-14; cf. Colossians 1.13). Jesus' death also changes the way in which we live, no longer for ourselves but for him who died for us (2 Cor 5.15).

So, when we're looking for a good summary of the gospel and we want to avoid doing a Humpty Dumpty, where should we look? Well, 1 Corinthians 15 reminds us that the gospel is primarily God's message concerning his Son and the salvation he has won for us:

'For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures ...'

Not a bad summary, is it? Sadly, those distorted but popular gospels of social justice, inclusion and unity that I mentioned earlier, all downplay the seriousness of sin and how it relates to salvation. The gospels of inclusion and unity both encourage us to stay as we are or unite as we are as if sin and error do not really matter before the one who is our risen Lord and righteous judge. The gospel of social justice displaces the saving death and resurrection of Jesus from the centre and majors instead on some of the consequences arising from these events. In contrast, the biblical gospel is God's message concerning his Son and the salvation he has won for us.

In a world confused by a range of different gospels, it is vital for us at the start of a year of ministry to return to things of first importance, namely, the heart of biblical Christianity and to resolve to keep the main thing the main thing in the year ahead. Given we live at a time when clarity of understanding is often absent, it is good for us to be those who listen to gospel of Christ humbly and carefully and, as a church, to be proclaiming this gospel urgently to a world so desperately in need. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Man abrogue

NEW FACES A CHRIST CHURCH

We have been privileged to be able to increase the team at Christ Church with 5 new faces joining the team. One will be involved as a staff member in the music ministry on Sunday evening and the remainder are our new Ministry Trainees.

A MUSIC WORKER

Graham Dickins

Graham hails from just-outside-the-M25 Chorleywood. He dropped his law studies a year early and joined Music Ministry as a trainee and had placements at two Anglican churches in Mayfair and Chelsea alongside the Cornhill Training Course. His passions lie in charity shops, video game music and his unconditional love of cats (even those weird hairless ones). He will be involved in the music ministry at Christ Church on Sunday evenings.



A QUARTET OF MINISTRY TRAINEES

Tom James

Tom grew up on the other end of the Piccadilly line in Cockfosters. He has three siblings and in his spare time enjoys cycling and rowing as well as listening to music. He also enjoys cricket and supported the England team until their inevitable sad demise.





Lucy Malton

Lucy became a Christian during her late teenage years after hearing the good news of Jesus at various summer camps. After leaving school, Lucy headed up to Newcastle University to study Geography for three years. She's now excited to be back in her home city and spending her free time running or on the tennis court.



Zac Moxon

Zac hails originally from Birmingham, a small town just north of Worcester and it was there that he became a Christian through summer camps. After having spent his later school years on the south coast, he became a keen bassoonist and decided to do a music degree. He enjoys going to concerts and watching 2nd-rate football.



Barney Wolstenholme

Barney grew up just south of the river in Battersea. He has previously been in the choir at Croydon Minster, Portsmouth Cathedral and King's College, Cambridge. During university, he also began serving in other areas of church life, including leading Bible studies and occasional preaching. Barney is a fan of Fulham FC and Surrey CCC and enjoys listening to music written before 1750.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES: CHRISTIAN CAMPS

I've been along to camp since I was 12 years old and it has been personally helpful to me at every stage of my Christian life since then. Camp has been crucial in teaching me the basic truths of the gospel, it has given me key relationships with older Christians as I've grown as a Christian and it has recently been very helpful to me learning how to teach and explain the gospel as a leader.

One thing I particularly love about the camps I do (LDN Holidays) is that every year so many children from completely unchurched families come along. Generally, the promise of activities like trampolining and aqua park is what brings them in, but year after year many campers find the talks and Bible studies so interesting and are keen to explore more of the Christian message with their leaders.

It's always a source of great joy when a friend agrees to come along to just one guest event to hear some of the gospel, and so it's crazy to think that these children, some of whom would usually never set foot in a church, are having the opportunity to hear over 15 gospel talks and about 8 Bible studies as well. It's also a really strengthening time for campers from Christian families, given that the schools they spend so much time in often create environments within which it can be very hard to keep going as a Christian.

Barney Wolstenholme



ORGAN FUND

After much discussion, an organ fund has been established to contribute towards the costs involved in the short-term maintenance of the existing pipe organ, the medium-term purchase and installation of a new digital organ and the longer-term purchase and installation of a new pipe organ.

A flyer has been prepared and is being sent out separately by email. Hard copies will be available from the Church office.

NOOKS AND CORNERS

INTERIOR WORKS

The second phase of the interior works has now been completed, slightly ahead of schedule. All the stonework has been cleaned, the missing plaster has been restored and the interior of the church has been brightened up with a fresh coat of paint.

The kitchen is now equipped with a combination steam oven and a hot cupboard, which should assist with the food preparation and serving the increased numbers we are seeing at church lunches and mid-week bible studies. All these works have been made possible by a generous legacy.

SECURITY WORKS

All the security works have now been completed. New railings have been put around the sub-station, new digital locks have been added to the gates along Eldon Road, a new gate and railings have been installed between the sub-station and the vestry and the Kynance Mews gate now has a new lock fitted, operating from a digital keypad. The inner glass doors at the main entrance to the church have also been fitted with a magnetic lock which operates from either a digital pad or a wireless audio intercom into the church office. An access policy will be implemented in due course.

KYNANCE MEWS/SOUTH GARDEN AND MEMORIAL GARDEN

Planning permission for the Edible Garden and Memorial Garden projects have been submitted and we hope to report some positive developments in the next newsletter.

ANTHONY WHISAW RA PAINTINGS

Following the redecoration of the church, both The Last Supper and The Crucifixion, donated by the local artist, have been installed on the north wall. A talk on the paintings by Revd. Dr Richard Davey, the author of the monograph of Anthony's work that was recently published by the Royal Academy of Arts, took place on Saturday 13th October in the church and was well attended.

HATCHES AND MATCHES

WEDDINGS

7 July

Michael Monaghan and Breanna Fletcher

4 August

Rob Perkins and Emma Bunting



BAPTISMS

30 September

Federico Mucelli, son of Pier Paolo Mucelli and Danelle Roberts

14 October

Goya Maria Anna von Unger, daughter of Konstantin Von Unger and Julinka Doenhoff

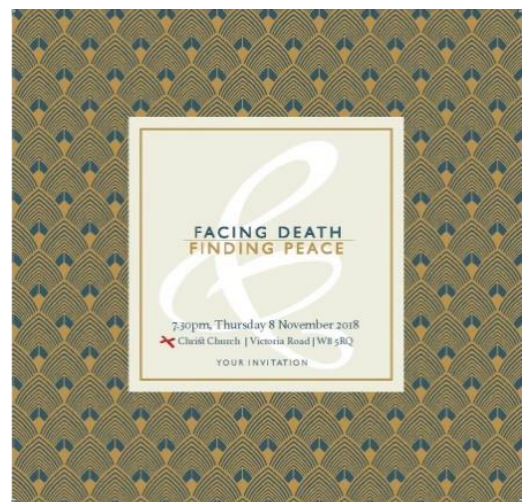
UPCOMING EVENTS

5 NOVEMBER

There will be a church family prayer meeting in the evening, starting at 7.15pm for supper or come for prayer from 8pm to 9.15pm. Please RSVP to Adele (admin@christchurchkensington.com)

8 NOVEMBER

“Facing Death, Finding Peace”. Jeremy Marshall, a former CEO of Hoare’s Bank who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, is being interviewed at Christ Church. This is an opportunity to hear first-hand the Christian perspective on one of the inevitabilities of life. The event starts at 7.30pm with drinks and canapes and there will be an opportunity to ask questions afterwards. Please sign up for this by emailing events@christchurchkensington.com or ringing 020 7937 6667.



GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

If you haven't already done so, we would still be grateful if you could complete and return a GDPR consent form, especially if you have recently started attending Christ Church – there are blank forms at the back of church.