

God Bless Sub-Postmasters



The word sin derives from an Old English word, 'syn' meaning, violation of divine law, an offence against God, or moral wrongdoing. It is an overtly religious term with deeper origins within the Hebrew understanding of 'Khata' meaning to fail to reach the goal or miss the mark. From these building blocks later theologians, and others, developed an understanding that sin is complicated and impacts on all areas of life, both personal, my own behaviour, and corporate, done with others, including institutions. Psychology also helps us understand that quite a lot of our behavioural patterns, bad and good, are inherited from our parents and grandparents, thus making more complex what was already difficult to unpick even more complex.

It is fair to say that sin is out of fashion, even within religious contexts, and many would now go along with the idea that so long as what I do does not harm anyone else then I can do what I like. What I do as an individual and what we do together, however, is intrinsically entwined with how we relate both to ourselves and others. 'Sin' and 'relationship' go together like fish and chips. It isn't easy to imagine one without the other – at least if we are honest. And that's the point. Believing that I, or we, can act out a negative behaviour that has no detrimental effect on either myself or others is at best delusional and at worst perverse. Sin and Relationships are peas in a pod. A negative impact has a negative consequence. Sin hurts.

The recent scandal within the post office whereby a computer system was seen to be infallible caused huge grievous damage to many innocent sub-postmasters because 'relationship' was forgotten. The result saw corporate sin committed on a staggering scale. If only more attention had been paid to the voices of those to whom the employer related, rather than the profit margin, then the post office would be in a much better position than it is today. Sin hurts. It hurts relationships.

The joy of Easter is that sin and relationship are put in their proper place. The pain of the cross is not denied as sin attempts to triumph. The place of good relationship with God, with our brothers and sisters who make up the worldwide human family, and with the whole of creation, is restored, envisioning who we are at our best and what we can be in the future. The trick is not to deny sin when you see it however unfashionable that might be. Easter reminds me that what I do impacts upon me, and you. It also reminds you that what you do impacts upon you, and me. This is honest. Nothing delusional or perverse here. And in being honest, hope is born.

Recognising sin when you see it means you can 'sin bin' it and move on knowing the right thing to do.

God bless sub-postmasters and all those who so courageously blow the whistle on sin.

Happy Easter!

Mark
Revd Mark Bailey