

## ALL-AGE WORSHIP, CHRISTIAN AID SUN, 10.5.26, LEVITICUS 25:8-11A & 17

### JUBILEE – WHAT ? , JUBILEE – WHERE ?

Let's start by engaging our imaginations. Something for you to think about. Imagine you drove your car some distance to another town. You parked your car in a multi-storey. Only, when you walk into town, you suddenly realise - you have no way of paying for that parking!... You don't have any cash on you. And you have forgotten your wallet or purse with your debit cards. So, you had no way of getting your car out of the multi-storey. You had no way of getting home... What do you do? Yes you pray & ask God to help... Then what? You don't know anyone in this town... Yes, God might prompt you to do something, once you have prayed. Like approaching someone in the street to help. Or going to the local town hall perhaps. Or you could try to find a local church.

This happened to Chris & I, way back in the 90s. When I was a 'penniless' Minister in training. We had travelled to a place near Blackpool for a Christian Conference. And we had gone into town before the conference. And I foolishly bought Bethanne a helium balloon with the last of our change. Then it dawned on us: we had nothing to pay for our parking. We couldn't get the car out of the multi-storey & it looked like we could rack up a bigger bill for the parking...

What did we do? I asked the guy selling the helium balloons if we could return the balloon, but he refused, even when we tried to explain. In the end, I found a cheque book in one of my pockets... Something of a miracle! Thankfully the multi-storey was manned, so I was able to write a cheque for the small sum of money to release our car... Jubilee! That moment did feel like Jubilee!

This is the meaning of Jubilee in the Bible. Both in Leviticus 25 and when Jesus declared 'Jubilee' at the beginning of his ministry. (We will come back to Jesus & Jubilee later...). The thinking behind Jubilee was to make sure that wealth did not get concentrated in the hands of the few. Sometimes people would fall on hard times & have to sell their family home. But with Jubilee every 50 years, it was only a matter of time before their family property would be rightfully returned to them. What joy those families must have felt on that day!

But on this Christian Aid Week Sunday, we are all too acutely aware that our world does not observe the festival of Jubilee. Too many people are too busy taking advantage of other people. Just as an aside here, there is some debate as to whether or not God's people ever fully observed Jubilee.

That experience of not being able to 'set free' our car, brought home to Chris & I - for a short period - what it means to be penniless & powerless. As we wandered along the high street of that town, we suddenly saw people there in a new light. That day we became aware of others like us. Many people there were penniless or near enough, including the guy selling those helium balloons. Pensioners counting their pennies. Young families with children & parents in shabby-looking clothes. Homeless people begging... I see something similar every time I go into Hemel these days. It's a similar story.

This **was** Belinda's story in Kenya too. And it's clear that life is still tough for her. Her country was forced to pay £4bn in debt repayments in 2023, while only being able to spend £1bn on health services for its citizens... Too many people, too many countries are imprisoned in cycles of poverty & debt.

I heard recently of a British oil company, making billions from selling petrol at inflated prices. Already making money hand over fist. They moved £1bn of their profits to Switzerland, to avoid paying UK taxes. That money was needed by our National Health Service & by our armed forces... Same story again & again. Private wealth over public health. Big money crushes little people.

This is not something we can just shrug our shoulders about. Not something that means we can give to CA one week & then forget about it all. What is happening every day in our world is clearly not biblical. It is offensive to the good news of Jesus, who declares 'Jubilee' - good news to the poor. One of the times Jesus gets angry is when he is in the Temple in Jerusalem. What does he see? He sees profit & profiteering given priority over people & prayer... And he turns over the tables of the money-changers in his righteous indignation.

Is this all too political ? I'm reminded of the words of Christian martyr, Archbishop Romero: 'When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask, why are the poor, poor, they call me a communist'. In all this, it is simply impossible to ignore the political implications of Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto. Jesus' words early on, run like a golden thread throughout his ministry:

READ Luke 4:17-19 ... ("to proclaim 'Jubilee', the year of the LORD's favour"...)

Impossible to ignore this simple truth: God wants the riches of our world to be much more fairly shared than they are at present. Jesus declared 'Jubilee'! And today Jesus promises us there will be Jubilee: freedom for the earth when he

returns to bring justice to the nations. Let's hope & pray & work for God's Jubilee. Alleluia! Amen?