

Perspectives of Paradox

Judgement (4th in the series inspired by Northumbria Community Prayer Guide 2024-25*)

****‘We often make hasty judgments and lapse too easily into black-and-white, either/or thinking. We ask God to help us take our time before coming to conclusions and so leave ourselves open to becoming ‘both/and’ people.’****



One of life's paradoxes is that things are rarely what they seem. This applies to current news as well as to history. Perspectives vary and any judgement is subject to limited information, personal experience, propaganda or spin.

World news is dispiriting with opposing dogmas, politics and nationalistic stances on the rise. Politicians argue. War and disputes rage. People live in fear. Fear can generate anger and the instinct to fight for survival, even at the expense of more lives, more pain, more loss.

It is easy to forge a strong opinion of who is right and who is wrong in any situation. We all have strong views about Russia and Ukraine, Israelis and Palestinians, Republicans and Democrats, ...etc..etc., even about people who are close to us. The paradox is that each side of any conflict can justify its chosen stance. The paradox is also that we are called to challenge injustice and abuse. So how do we pray? Who do we pray for?

Jesus said – “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*”
Matthew 5.43-44

Amidst our protests against abuses and injustices, our prayers and hopes must also be for the aggressor or abuser; and for people to embrace one another across long-established barriers of hatred or fear. When people are divided by fear and conflict our prayers may be the only way of holding them together. A vigil held by Christian Aid/Embrace Middle East prays:

‘Pray not for Arab or Jew, for Palestinian or Israeli, but pray rather for ourselves, that we might not divide them in our prayers but keep them both together in our hearts.’

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*with thanks to
Northumbria
COMMUNITY