



Community Chaplain

East Preston / Reservoir

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Hi again!

How has your month been? Hopefully the constant media barrage of the "War on Terrorism" and our national political jousting hasn't been affecting you too much!

Last month I said I would begin to address the issue of what God is doing in the world to eradicate it of all its evil. Pretty huge question, hey. And it becomes even more profound when we realise that this evil actually stems from our own hearts. How in the world is God going to change my heart? To, if I may put it bluntly, get the hell out of me?

Instead of giving you a technical answer, let me tell you the short version of the story of a man I know whose heart was changed by God. Mine.

I was brought up in a decent home. We went to church. I was basically a good person, at least on the outside! But in my teenage years I became addicted to a bondage which I would only later realise could ruin me. I came to know that what I was doing was wrong, but I just couldn't change. Until I heard this story:

"Imagine you're at the beach. It's a beautiful day and you're lying on the sand. There's no one around, and you just lie there soaking up the sun.

There's a pier nearby, and after a while you happen to notice a person walking out towards the end of it. There's nothing unusual about this, until you see him jump into the water! And then, of all things, you notice that he can't swim and is beginning to drown!

After the initial shock, you realise that this guy needs saving, and since no one else is around, you swim out and rescue him. Once back on shore, you resuscitate him, and after a few coughs and splutters, he seems to be all right. Phew! The man thanks you profusely, and you in modesty say it was nothing at all (!), and wish him all the best as he departs from you.

'What an amazing experience', you think to yourself as you lie back down on the sand, and you can't help but get it out of your mind ...

Half an hour goes by, and you decide to get up for a stretch, and when you look up, you can't believe it - the same guy is walking on the pier!

You watch, transfixed, and you wouldn't believe it, the same guy jumps in again.

And begins to drown again.

And because no-one else is around, your pure conscience tells you to swim out again and save him, so you do. Having swum all the way out, dragged him back, resuscitated him, with everything back to normal, you begin to ask him some questions:

'Why are you doing this? What's wrong with you? Don't you know you can't swim?' etc

The guy says 'Yeh, yeh, I know, I know; I won't do it again, I promise'. And because you're a good natured soul, you let him go, believing him.

And you try to lie down again and rest, but you can't. Your mind is in overdrive at all the events going on today!

But you wouldn't believe what happens. After a while you open your eyes again, and what do you see? The same guy. On the same pier. Walking You can't believe it. He jumps in again.

And this time you're really wondering whether you should go out to save him at all ... but your good heart wins again. And you save him, the whole process, but this time you begin to really give him a piece of your mind. Taking him firmly by the shoulders, you shake him, and you really blast him 'Why the hell are you doing this?' 'Will you promise you won't do it again?' 'Are you sure?' He's always answering Yes, Yes, Yes, and finally you let him go his way. And you don't know what to think any more.

Lying back down on the sand, you want to relax, but you can't, full of nervous energy wondering just whether you'll see the same guy on the pier again. Finally, exhausted, you doze off forgetfully ...

But you wake once more. And you see ... the same guy ... on the same pier ... and he jumps in again.

And this time you say 'Stuff him, let him drown'.

How often has God had the right to do that to you but He hasn't !!!"

When I heard that final sentence, my heart broke. And something began to happen in my life. I opened myself up to God. And my heart was changed. And I was free.

This story, my story, serves to illustrate just one word, one concept, which embodies what God is doing. Grace.

Giving a person another go. Letting them start again. Not holding their past against them. Grace.

Have you experienced grace? One encounter will never leave you the same again.

God bless,

