

Immanuel, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Deuteronomy 26: 1-11 John 6: 25-35

### The World Is Not Enough.

I titled this reflection 'The World Is Not Enough', and if you're a fan of James Bond, and perhaps looking forward to seeing the latest and Last Bond Thriller featuring Daniel Craig, then you will more than likely know that The World Is Not Enough is the name of the 1999 Bond Thriller featuring Pierce Brosnan. You probably don't remember that much about it, and to be fair, they all blend into one another in the end - particularly Pierce Brosnan's workman-like but dull run at 007.

The plot of the 1999 Bond Thriller, The World Is Not Enough revolves around oil, and in particular oil pipelines and the ascent of Russian Oil Oligarchs, their immense wealth, and influence on the politics of the United Kingdom. Rather than make a prescient prediction about how this might play out in the UK of 2021, the film cleverly swerves hard-bitten social commentary in favour of girls, car chases, girls, rogue MI6 agents, girls, explosions, girls, stolen plutonium, girls, submarine fights, and girls. Part of it was filmed in Swindon, up at what was the old Motorola plant.

Threats to the world come in all sorts of shapes and sizes for 007. In reality, the threats to our world are often more mundane, and often a slow boil, rather than a flash in the pan.

I mentioned oil in my introduction to the 1999 Bond Thriller The World Is Not Enough as it is a natural resource and fits very well as an example of a natural resource that the human race makes use of every day. I also wanted to tenuously link it to the concept of harvest. We celebrated the harvest last week, and it was a lovely service. Our harvest festival is a callback to an agrarian or agricultural society. We gather in the crops in August and September and then celebrate God's gift of produce to us and set aside what we don't need for others. There's a comforting notion in that. There's also an overt link to the natural world, and a way of life very different to our own in a large urban town.

But harvesting goes on all the time. We're constantly fishing the seas, we import food from all around the world, some grown in fields, some force grown in greenhouses. Strawberries in December? Of course, you can. Look no further than the nearest supermarket. How does it get here? Plane, train, ship, lorry. They all run on oil, they all burn fuel, as do the factories that make the food, as do you and I when we cook it.

We pump oil and gas out of the ground all the time. Crude oil is a naturally occurring fossil fuel - meaning it comes from the remains of dead organisms. It's not made from dinosaurs, but is made from organic matter made in Earth's then shallow seas millions of years ago, this organic matter then lands on the ocean floor and mixes with inorganic material that enters the ocean by rivers. It is this sediment on the ocean floor that then forms oil over many millions of years.

We are so lucky that God has given us this fruit of the ground to make life what it is. Of course, the authors of our readings knew about oils - olive oil for example, but there's nothing in the Bible about the modern petrochemical industry - Trust me I've looked - but are the fossil fuels we take from the Earth any different from the sheafs of wheat all safely gathered in? Is the lump of coal any different to the loaf of bread? Crude oil might not sound like manna in the wilderness but if you're an oil sheik in Qatar with a desert full of the stuff to sell it's certainly a manna in the wilderness of sorts. Certainly manna for your bank account.

For years now humanity has done what humanity does best and used a lot of these resources without thinking about the consequences. We plough the fields, we scatter the good seed, we pump the gas, we heat our homes, we switch on the TV, we watch Bond films, we may even watch the 1999 Bond Thriller *The World Is Not Enough* - but this all comes at a cost.

In recent weeks you may have heard of Insulate Britain. Insulate Britain is an organization which, if you believe the media, are as much of a threat to our way of life as any Bond villain. Insulate Britain is, in fact, part of the movement which believes - rightly or wrongly - that direct action is needed to combat climate change. Climate change is indeed real. It has slowly but steadily happened as we have exploited this planet's resources, allowing the ice-caps to melt, to allow the world to heat up, to allow extreme weather, heatwaves, floods. For the climate change activists, we are indeed reaping what we have sown.

Insulate Britain has taken direct action. They have glued themselves to motorways, roads, airports, ports causing no end of disruption. You might not agree with their methods. If you don't, just wait until you hear about Jesus in the temple with the money-lenders. Direct action has - like it or not - a long history.

What do Insulate Britain want? That the UK government immediately promises to fully fund and take responsibility for the insulation of all social housing in Britain by 2025; That the UK government immediately promises to produce within four months a legally binding national plan to fully fund and take responsibility for the full low-energy and low-carbon whole-house retrofit, with no externalised costs, of all homes in Britain by 2030 as part of a just transition to full decarbonisation of all parts of society and the economy. That's all. And by insulating the UK's homes we can make a big impact on climate change and energy consumption - particularly for the poorest in society.

Insulate Britain isn't the only militant climate change group in the UK, there's the Extinction Rebellion, and many others. And it comes as no surprise. Climate Change affects every one of us. You can expect more direct action in the run up to the UN COP26 Climate Change Summit in Glasgow at the end of this month. As stewards of God's Earth we should pray for action on climate change.

For the agitators, of course, these summits don't move fast enough. We are in the climate emergency, not on the edge of it - this is what they argue. There is frustration that Governments and corporations, businesses, don't do enough. You can see their point when billionaires - instead of paying fair shares of taxes, go for exciting jolly rides into space - much like a Bond Villain. In particular the 1979 Bond Thriller *Moonraker*, featuring Roger Moore as 007 and the metal toothed bad guy Jaws.

Far worse than the metal-toothed bad guy Jaws, are those High officials, Kings, Presidents, Ministers, Prime Ministers, mentioned this week in the Pandora Papers. The Pandora papers are the largest trove of leaked data exposing tax haven secrecy in history. They provide a rare window into the hidden world of offshore finance, casting light on the financial secrets of some of the world's richest people. It seems money can also be harvested; was harvested, but many of the top 3% of our society kept the harvest for themselves. We're talking of billions of pounds. When you think how much change that money could make to the fight against climate change, how many homes it could insulate - perhaps it's no wonder people are cross about it. That troublemaker Jesus turning over the money-lenders tables doesn't seem so unreasonable now.

So how do I tie all that to our readings?

God gives life to the world. That's what we learned in our readings this morning. God's gift of life, however, is not to be taken lightly. While we have happily taken from this world, it's probably about time that we give something back. Jesus simply asks that we follow God's love. Deuteronomy talks about God's covenant with the Israelites - while they love God, God will protect them; while they are good stewards of his resources, there will be enough for everyone.

Three lessons then, from Deuteronomy:

First: we are instructed to recall that our redemption is rooted in God's faithfulness to his word acting on behalf of the homeless (wandering Aramean), the oppressed (afflicted resident aliens), and the marginalized (orphans and widows).

Second: we are encouraged to celebrate not simply the bounty of the land, but the faithfulness of God which is the source of the bounty. Our island home Earth sustains us with its produce because God is faithful to maintain the fruitfulness of the land.

Third: we are instructed to position ourselves as channels of God's blessing to the vulnerable and the marginalized through our obedience to his desire that we consistently share it with them.

And that's just as heroic as anything James Bond ever did. Amen.