

Wonder Women! Then and Now

Psalm 46 v 1 and Matthew Ch 25 v 34 - 40

This month I am starting with the last line of April's Devotional Paper – 'The Lord is your strength and shield, a very present help in times of trouble.' These are strong, positive, straight - forward words that leave us in no doubt as to their meaning. They are as much a comfort for us today as when they were first written. In these unprecedented, troubling times I'm sure you have found that practical help has come from both expected and unexpected places; families are coming closer together, neighbours are helping neighbours and communities are offering help to those they don't even know.

In the weeks following 16th March, the Prime Minister and his right hand men and women have informed the nation, on a daily basis, of the devastation that the coronavirus has caused as it has swept across the country and the measures they were putting in place to try and keep us safe. Rishi Sunak, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urged us to look after one another and that small acts of kindness were important.

Jesus had something to say about these 'small acts of kindness' in Matthew Ch 25 v 40. 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!' This principle has driven the lives of many Wonder Women throughout the ages. They have put their faith into action and made helping those less fortunate than themselves their lives' work. Women like Florence Nightingale, or 'the lady with the lamp' as she is often called. Florence was born in 1820 in Italy, hence her name, but a year later the family moved back to England and she was brought up in Hampshire and Derbyshire. She worked hard to educate herself and rebelled against the expected role of a woman merely becoming a wife and mother, only announcing her decision to enter the field of nursing in 1844. She followed her strong desire to devote her life to the service of others and became most well known for her work as a nurse during the Crimean War. She founded The School for Nursing at St Thomas's hospital in London which is much in the news at the moment, as are the extra field hospitals throughout the country - the Nightingale Hospitals. Florence advocated that 'every nurse ought to wash her hands very frequently'. Where have we heard that before?

In the same year that Florence Nightingale died, another Wonder Woman was born - Mother Teresa who, as we know, spent many years of her life working in the slums of Calcutta caring for the city's poorest and sickest people. Mother Teresa was born in 1910 and was baptised Agnes Goxha Bojaxhiu. Her father died when she was only 8 years old and subsequently she became extremely close to her mother, who instilled in her a deep commitment to charity work. At the age of 18 she felt she was being called to a religious life and took her first vows as a nun in 1931. It was then that she took on the name of Mother Teresa. She travelled to Calcutta and taught in Saint Mary's High School for girls until she felt another call which presented her with the work for which she is most well-known. The Missionaries of Charity was founded in 1950 with only a handful of teachers but grew and expanded, not just through India, but throughout the world during the 1950s and 1960s. Mother Teresa established a

leper colony, an orphanage, a nursing home, a family clinic and a string of mobile health clinics before her death in 1997 at the age of 87.

In following Jesus' words this instinct of helping others should come naturally to us. Today each one of us is required to be a 'Wonder Woman', even if we are self-isolating and practising social distancing. We can help each other by keeping in touch by telephone, by SKYPE, by Face time and all the other forms of modern technology or even just by writing a letter but, most importantly, we can harness the power of prayer. We do not need to gather together to pray. We can pray for those who are ill; those who have lost loved ones; for the doctors and nurses and for all keeping the essential services functioning as normal and we can pray that there will be some good to come out of the whole situation. Pray that values such as care and consideration for others, thoughtfulness and 'small acts of kindness' may be of ultimate importance in making decisions whether large or small. Maybe the world will be a better place!!!

For Discussion;

1. Who do you think are the new Wonder Women emerging from this pandemic?
2. Do you think this situation will change the way the world thinks in the future?

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