

## Imposters

I am going to start this morning with a quote from a famous poem -

*If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;*

This poem called simply 'If' by Rudyard Kipling was voted Britain's favourite poem a few years ago and is probably the best known poem in the English Language. It is a proclamation of good, solid human values. There are quotes from this poem all over the place. If you are into tennis, for example, you might know that these same two lines I have just quoted are engraved above the entrance to Centre Court at Wimbledon.

*If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;*

We are in Lent now, a time when we are traditionally supposed to prepare ourselves, mentally and spiritually, to celebrate an event which by all the natural rules of physics and biology should have been the greatest disaster in the history of the human race - in fact of this planet.

For those of us who believe that we are not here by accident, that we have been created for a purpose, what can possibly be a greater disaster than to reject and kill the very one who designed that purpose in the first place? Where would that leave us? Where *did* that leave us?

What would have happened if the world had rejected, say for example - penicillin?

**Before penicillin, even an infected pinprick or a tiny cut might lead to death. Hospitals were full of people with simple infections that had got out of control. Children died regularly from diseases like scarlet fever, or from infections that today we don't think twice about. I don't believe I am exaggerating when I say that many of us would not be here today if it wasn't for antibiotics touching our lives, or the lives of our parents.**

**Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin in 1928, was a simple humble man, he never bothered to patent his discovery for personal profit, and when he was asked to what he attributed his success, he said: 'I can only suppose that God wanted penicillin, and that this was his reason for creating Alexander Fleming.'**

**It took twelve years for penicillin to be recognised as the miracle drug it undoubtedly is, but where would we be today if some one had taken Fleming's discovery, and thrown it down the toilet? Think of the millions of lives that would have been lost. It would have been a disaster.**

**But the world of course did not reject penicillin, Fleming was given 25 honorary degrees, 26 medals, 18 prizes, 13 decorations, the freedom of 15 cities, and honorary membership in academies and societies all over the world. Medical centres, research institutes, and even a moon crater were named in honour of the beloved 'father' of penicillin. Alexander Fleming was knighted and called 'Sir Alexander Fleming'.**

**No – humanity did not reject the 'father' of penicillin, but it**

**did reject the creator of the world.**

**What greater disaster can there be than that?**

***“He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognise him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.”*** (John 1:10-11 NLT)

**The rejection of Jesus Christ would have been a disaster far greater than if the world had rejected penicillin.**

**To his followers the death of Jesus was certainly a disaster - all the dreams they might have had of a renewed Kingdom of Israel, of bringing peace to the world, all gone in an instant.**

**To Jesus enemies his death was a triumph, at last they could get on with things, they had got rid of that pesky prophet who was forever exposing their hypocrisy and lies.**

**To Satan the death of Jesus was great triumph. The Son of God had failed, there he was hanging naked and broken on a Roman cross, finally the world was his!**

**But Satan had not read Rudyard Kipling's 'If'.**

**If he had he would have known that both Triumph and Disaster are nothing but two imposters, to be treated just the same.**

**In fact Satan had not read his Bible, or if he did he did not understand it. The Bible is full of stories of events that seem like disaster, but are really triumphs of God's grace and mercy.**

**When Joseph was thrown into the pit and sold to the passing traders, that must have seemed like a disaster. When Moses killed the Egyptian overseer, and fled into the desert, that**

**must have seemed like a disaster. When Jonah was thrown overboard into the raging sea to drown, surely that must have seemed like a disaster. But in each and every one of these 'disasters' God had a plan, the disaster was an imposter, pretending to be something it really wasn't. Nothing is what seems, until we see it through the eyes of God.**

**Lets have a look then, at the greatest imposter of a disaster – the crucifixion of Jesus Christ - through the eyes of God.**

***"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.***

***Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*** (Php 2:6-11 NLT)

**A triumph that is no imposter, a triumph to end all triumphs, better than kicking out the Romans and restoring Israel's earthly kingdom, better than than anything that Jesus' followers could have ever imagined,**

***God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of***

***Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

**And what a total and absolute disaster for Satan and his cronies! The prize he thought he had won, his greatest triumph snatched from his claws as God raised Jesus from the grave and gave him the name above every other name not just in Israel, not just on this earth, but *in heaven and on earth and under the earth - ALL OVER THE UNIVERSE!!!***

**So that's Jesus, but what about us? What about little old you and me? What about my triumphs, my disasters? How often have you wished that you could turn to some chapter in the Bible and read about your life from God's point of view – but you can't of course. We have to live by faith. But we can have the mind of Christ. We can, and should, have the same approach to life that Christ had.**

***"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to..."*** (Php 2:5-6 NLT)

**Now, there are of course disasters which are never unmasked, disasters and tragedies which are all too real, the death of loved ones through sickness, the hunger and suffering of children and innocent men and women in places like Darfur. Some disasters we bring upon ourselves, others like 9/11 are brought about by others. But that is a different issue altogether, a subject for another sermon. By calling disaster and tragedy imposters I am in no way trivialising suffering, *"weep with those who weep"*, we are told, *"laugh***

***with those who laugh.”***

**This morning I want to remind ourselves of just one thing.**

***God is in command.***

**To have the attitude of Christ is to be willing to be obedient to God, even when that seems to lead to disaster, even if when means giving up control, even if it means being misunderstood, ignored, rejected.**

**Why?**

**Because *God is in command.***

**To have the attitude of Christ is to be able not just to try to convince ourselves of the truth that...“ *God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him”...***

**But to be able to declare that from our hearts believing every word of it even when disaster seems to loom up in front of us.**

**Why?**

**Because we know that *God is in command.***

**And when things go well do we pat ourselves on the back and say how clever we are? No, of course not, because whatever happens whether we meet with triumph or disaster we know that God is in command.**

**Being a follower of Jesus Christ doesn't mean that we have been given an escape route from suffering it means that no matter what comes our way, like the apostle Paul we can be absolutely...**

***...convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's***

***love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow--not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below--indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen***