

September

From the Vicar

If you could hear me speak this rather than read me typing it you would have trouble working out what I am saying because I've just come back from the dentist – and it was a serious visit! What began as a check up progressed to a scale and polish and became a massive filling. I am sore in both tooth and jaw.

But the thing is that lately when I have gone to the dentist for treatment there has been a problem with the anaesthetic. I'm proud to say that I am still an NHS dental patient, no mean feat in this day and age, but I'm beginning to wonder if I am suffering because of it. Don't get me wrong my dentist knows what he is doing, fillings never fall out, he always backs off when I flinch in the chair, he doesn't ever ask me questions when it feels as if both his hands and feet are crowded into my mouth and he even has up to date car magazines in the waiting room. No, he is a good dentist, except when it comes to the anaesthetic.

You see, out comes the needle and deep into the gum it goes, (feels like a foot and a half) and then we wait. I go a bit numb and in he goes with the drill. Within milliseconds I am 'calmly' gesturing that there maybe some feeling left – Ooooww! I cry. My dentist is surprised (not as surprised as me, my friend), "we'll pop a bit more in." But still the sensation remains. Then the odd thing happens, he turns to the nurse and says something I don't hear but there is shuffling in surgical drawers and a new syringe is produced and administered – ZAP! Within seconds I cannot feel my lips, my nose, my cheeks or my tongue. I say to him, "my goodness that was something different, I bet that's what the private patients get." To which he smiles and says nothing except, "I think you're ready now, open wide." Now he can drill for oil as far as I'm concerned and I lie back and let him get on with it.

Understand me when I say I am making no political point in this letter but has the NHS been short changing me all these years. What I thought was good and had my very best interests at heart is maybe being a little more expedient than I realise. When I thought that the financial reserves of the Treasury were ready to fund my root canal surgery, was I, in fact, being short changed? It's not until you get a dose of private medicine that you realise that things can be so different. I had cause to go for a consultation and scan at the Alexandra Hospital for back pain the other month: I chose my consultant, chose my date to see him, had a scan within a week and saw the consultant 5 days after that and Bob's your Uncle!

Why do we so readily put up with less than is on offer. Ok, private health and dental care costs a lot of money and I can only go because it is part of my wife's work policy and to be perfectly honest the NHS has never ever let my family down – not ever. I truly think they are great. But when it comes to worship and religion why don't we go 'private'? Why do we settle for the cheapest option or stick with the level of 'treatment' we have always had?

It may be that you stepped away from the Christian Church and faith when you were younger or when a particular episode in your life made it difficult to believe - "I'm not getting in that dentist's chair again!". It may be that you follow the faith your family has followed for generations – "what's wrong with a foot pedal drill? He's been our dentist for years." It could be that you have never been to church or ever tried to put Jesus to the test of His promises – "Dentist? Why do I need a dentist? Nothing hurts yet so I'll steer clear."

"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!"

From the book of Psalms 34 verse 8

You know, what we have experienced in life and faith and worship is not always the fullness of what God has to give us. Being settled in a life without Jesus Christ is to be in a life that is not as full as it could be. To not know Jesus as your friend and Saviour is to not know the depth of his love and the security of wrongs forgiven, death and Satan defeated and a place in heaven assured.

In John's book in the bible about the life of Jesus he records Jesus saying,

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10 verse 10.

Isn't that what we desperately want, isn't there a fullness that we yearn for and a good taste that we crave and a future that we wish for that is free?

From now on each time I go to the dentist I intend to ask for the good stuff, no more settling for the thin, the cheap, the usual, the passable; I want the stuff that works! What about you?

In the Love of Christ, Rev. Rob Hinton Vicar of All Saints.