

Thought for the Day 15th April - John Reed

Read James 1:12-18

Are you afraid of change? Many people are.

When railways were first introduced to the U.S., some people feared that they'd be the downfall of the nation. Martin Van Buren, the Governor of New York, wrote to President Jackson in January 1829: *As you may know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed.*

In fact, people had been quite used to traveling at those “breakneck” speeds on horseback for centuries! But whereas top speed on horseback was perhaps forty miles an hour at full gallop, trains were soon ‘roaring and snorting’ their way through the countryside at far greater speeds than that. And then came the motor car. The first record with an automobile was set in 1898 by Count Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat of Paris, France, with an average speed of 39.24 mph (63.13 km/h). By 1904 Louis Emile Rigolly stunned the world by hitting 103.55 mph (166.64 km/h). Then there came the aeroplane, then the rocket. By 1952 the first passenger jet could travel 500 mph (805 km/h). And by 1961 astronauts were orbiting the earth at 16,000 miles per hour (25750 km/h). Remarkably, none of them died from travelling at such breakneck speeds!

We live in a world of increasingly rapid change. Now, I don't agree with the Duke of Cambridge who, in the late 1800s, said: *"Any change, at any time, for any reason, is to be deplored"*. But I do feel the need for a point of stability and constancy.

The author Lloyd Douglas as a university student lived in a boarding house. Downstairs on the first floor was an elderly, retired music teacher, who was confined to a wheelchair. Douglas would often bound down the steps, open the man's door, and ask "Well, what's the good news?" The old man would pick up his tuning fork, tap it on the side of his wheelchair and declare, "That's middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat, the piano across the hall is out of tune, but, my friend, *that* is middle C!" He had discovered one thing upon which he could depend in a turning world.

For Christians our unchanging focal point is Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews says: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8). And James writes to his fellow Christians under trial, reminding them that if they remain steadfast, they will receive the crown of life (James 1:12). This is because our future doesn't depend on things that in our control, but on God, and *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change"* (James 1:17).

In a constantly and rapidly changing world, we have a fixed point, a rock on which we can build for eternity.