

Thought for the day Friday May 8

Read: Acts 4:5-12

These times of stay-at-home social isolation have led many to explore ways of providing for ourselves at home. This includes many people starting to grow their own vegetables in their gardens, and keeping their own chickens (as, I recently shared, we have done at the Reed household).

Of course, once you've harvested those home-grown vegetables and collected those organic free-range eggs, you have to then get busy in the kitchen. Many of us have been dusting off the various kitchen appliances that have sat unused for years and the cookbooks that are usually only there for display, and are exploring cooking and baking at a whole new level. (I myself have mastered a lovely recipe for pulled pork in the slow-cooker and am avidly reading my new book of recipes for home-baked gluten-free bread).

Western Australian man Rob Nixon has gained a huge following in recent years, thanks to his YouTube channel "Nicko's Kitchen," which has now diversified into such new arenas as TikTok and a successful online recipes site. He has been mentioned in the same breath as Gordon Ramsey and Jamie Oliver. So I was interested to read the other day [see the story here: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/chef-says-way-make-the-21983379>] that Rob Nixon has shared how he makes his mashed potatoes so creamy and smooth. Many people have their favourite tricks for this, often involving butter or cream. But Rob's tip is different: use the potato skins! Yes, that's right, the things we usually peel off and throw away – he says that's where the value actually lies. Soak the skins in simmering milk, and voilà! You have the key ingredient to take your mash to the next level.

It made me wonder what else there is that we usually disregard and discard that in fact we ought to treasure and use?

In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John have been dragged by the Sadducees before the Sanhedrin.

[Just by way of explanation, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection and life after death, hence their objection to the apostles "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). And the Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish judicial council in Jerusalem, under the leadership of the high priest (Acts 4:5-6). Remember that Jesus and the disciples were all Jews, and that at this stage Christianity was regarded as a new movement, or sect, within Judaism – hence the fact that the Sanhedrin claimed authority over the apostles.]

The apostles are asked: "By what power or by what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7). (The event being referred to is the healing of the lame beggar in Acts 3:1-9 – see Acts 4:9). Peter responds that this was done in "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who you crucified, whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 4:10). He then says that Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone" (Acts 4:11). Peter is quoting from Psalm 118:22, a verse that Jesus himself quoted in Matthew 21:42.

He is saying – as Jesus himself had claimed – that Jesus, despite being rejected by the Jewish authorities, had turned out to be the key figure in God’s plan of salvation.

And, in turn, Jesus had chosen these two unlikely and unqualified fishermen to become the leaders of his new movement, and to stand before the Sanhedrin and speak for him.

And he continues to seek out and call and use people that others might have dismissed as insignificant. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28: “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world ...”

In other words, God chooses to take the potato peelings of humanity, and turn them into the key ingredient in his cosmic recipe of salvation!