

## Thought for the Day 25th June - John Thew

### I CAN'T BREATHE

From CPX, contributed by John Thew

On 15<sup>th</sup> June, Anna Grummitt wrote the “Thinking Out Loud” column for the Centre for Public Christianity. CPX is a small media company in Sydney, headed by Simon Smart, that offers a Christian perspective on contemporary life.

Anna entitled her piece **“I can’t breathe.”**

*Those three words have been everywhere since the shocking murder of George Floyd. And the more they run through my mind, the more they sound like a mantra for 2020 as a whole.*

*George Floyd couldn’t breathe as Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck. In the protests sparked by his death, we see powerfully how many others feel suffocated under the crushing weight of racial discrimination.*

*Here in Australia, Floyd’s death recalled that of Aboriginal man David Dungay, who also cried “I can’t breathe” twelve times before he died, held down by guards in a Sydney jail back in 2015.*

*All this against the backdrop of a pandemic that has killed more than 423,000 people worldwide, most from being unable to breathe. Even in the Amazon jungle, known as the “lungs of the world”, thousands are dying due to a shortage of oxygen tanks.*

*And 2020 opened with Australia’s Black Summer bushfires. According to health experts, nearly 450 people died from the bushfire smoke that engulfed the country.*

*In this year when so many are fighting for breath, my thoughts have turned to the one who did the same in the hours before his death, hanging on a Roman cross. Crucifixion is essentially death by asphyxiation, as the victim hangs from their wrists, their chest constricted.*

*In other words, Jesus knows what it’s like to be unable to breathe. Christians believe he was crushed not just by his own bodyweight or the machinery of the Roman state, but by all the brutality and evil of our world. The cross speaks of hope, but first it says: he knows, he knows what it’s like. The God with wounds knows your pain.*

Isaiah foretold the pain of the One who knows our pain: (53.3-6)

*He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*

*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Christians are eternally grateful to the One who has taken that pain on himself: (Romans 5.1-5)

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*