

Thought for the Day 5th August - John Reed

Read Matthew 7:21-27

I try to avoid talking too much about Donald Trump, for a whole bunch of reasons. Why are we so fascinated by the politics of another country? Can we trust everything the oh-so-partisan (both ways) media tell us? And aren't we all just a little tired of hearing about it?

But this story this morning, although it's about Donald Trump, says something that touches us all.¹

You may have heard that the former Democratic congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis recently passed away. When his funeral was held last week in Atlanta, Georgia, three former presidents attended. But not the current president. Now, there could be all sorts of reasons for that, and I'm not going to attempt to guess why he wasn't there, or to impute some sort of blame. Presidents are busy men, after all.

The media did, of course, both notice and make comment. One journalist, former *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* political correspondent Jonathan Swan asked Mr Trump directly, in an interview on Axios on HBO, how history would remember Lewis' contributions to the nation.

"I don't know. I don't know John Lewis," he said. "He chose not to come to my inauguration." Later in the interview, coming back to the same theme, he said: "nobody has done more for black Americans than I have. He should have come. I think he made a big mistake."

Now, here's the thing that struck me. It's nothing to do with which side of politics I, or Mr Trump, or John Lewis, or anyone else stands on. It's to do with how we choose to judge people. And in Mr Trump's mind, John Lewis is condemned because of how he has responded to (or failed to respond to) Mr Trump by not coming to his inauguration. Not his character, or his achievements, but solely on how he has respected (or failed to respect) *me*.

Now, I suspect Donald Trump is not alone in thinking this way. I suspect most of us, in some way or other, perhaps in greater ways or lesser ways, tend to form our judgment of people based on what they or haven't done *for us*. And that's quite understandable. And in the end, we may say: "I don't particularly care what Donald Trump (or anyone else) thinks of me."

But what we all need to understand is that there is one opinion that does matter. Our eternal destiny lies in God's hands. And his judgment of us also depends on how we have treated and behaved towards him.

In this passage, Jesus speaks to those who *claim* to have served him, to have done things in his name, and says to them: "I never knew you. Depart from me" (v. 23). On what basis does he make this judgment? On the basis of how they have respected and listened to him. Those he dismisses are "workers of lawlessness" (v. 23), and "foolish men" who hear his words and do not do them (v. 26).

In the end, we will be judged not on all of our achievements in life, but purely and simply on our relationship with Jesus. And he, unlike any of the rest of us, is the perfect judge.

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/donald-trump-bashes-dead-civil-rights-leader-for-skipping-his-inauguration-20200804-p55iks.html>