

10th September 2020

Press

“[Jesus] entered into Capernaum ... and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them ... And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”

Bible, Mark 2:1-4 (King James, or Authorised, Version)

Jesus, it appeared, had the same problem as any modern celebrity – they couldn't get near him for the press! Oh, I know it's just the language of the early 17th century in the Authorized Version of the Bible. But it allows me to ask the question: what do *we* do about The Press?

Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address as US President in 1801, listed freedom of the press – alongside freedom of religion and protection under the Law – to be a fundamental principle of a civilised society. Freedom of The Press is important. But with freedom comes responsibility, not just to shareholders, or market-percentages, or profit-margins of a company, but to society as a whole. The “phone hacking scandal” of recent memory and the subsequent Levison enquiry remind us of the responsibility of The Press – indeed, all forms of the media – to be aware of the welfare of a *whole* society and not just a limited section of it.

George Bernard Shaw wrote in *Man and Superman* in 1903, “Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.” And why? Because responsibility is hard to exercise. It takes thought, seeing beyond self, interpreting the good of all, exercising accountability for the welfare of all, the Utilitarian principle of the “greatest good for the greatest number”.

If Jesus knew that the people *couldn't come nigh unto him for the press*, perhaps as well as talking about forgiveness, and healing a paralysed man, he might have had a few words to say about freedom and responsibility, so *we* can know that we are forgiven for misusing our freedom, and be more committed to taking our responsibilities seriously.

Prayer for today

*Living God, thank you for my freedoms. Help me to use them well.
Thank you for my responsibilities. Help me to carry them out responsibly. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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