

11th May 2022

SUSPICIONS

**“All seems infected that the infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.”**

Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

On a recent rail-journey my train was delayed. The announcement informed us: “There is a suspicious package on the line.” The slower trains in front were delayed too, which meant our “express” had to travel at the speed of the slowest, all because of the suspicious package. “Better safe than sorry”, I hear you say, and rightly so. Thank God for a sharp-eyed train-driver or rail-worker. But it got me thinking about being suspicious.

What makes us suspicious? The “too good to be true” offer of a cut-price deal? The phone-call about an *Amazon* payment that feels like a scam? The strange noise outside our home late at night? We are right to be “on our guard” against those who would trick us or cause us harm. Aren’t our TV screens full of warnings about scams and rip-offs?

But what about *unfounded* suspicions, caused by prejudice or judgement? Are the “bikers” in the carpark with their leathers and tattoos up to no good? Has that black kid been pulled over for a “stop and search” because of the neighbourhood or the colour of his skin? Is the politician who espouses different views from mine to be mistrusted in everything?

Alexander Pope had it right. Suspicions begin with us. If we are infected with prejudice and judgement, we will see infection and rottenness in others; and if we are jaundiced in our attitudes, we will have a jaundiced take on the lives, motives and behaviour of others.

Tom Paxton in his 1972 album, *Peace will Come*, offers these lines:

Peace, peace will, peace will come, and let it begin with me.

We, we need, we need peace, and let it begin with me.

My own life is all I can hope to control.

Let my life be lived for the good, the good of my soul,

And let it bring peace, sweet peace, peace will come, and let it begin with me.

If it works with peace, so it can be in all areas of our lives. If we deal with *our* infections and jaundice, how much more readily might we find we’ve left behind our suspicious nature, and to everyone’s benefit?

A prayer for today

Let me be slow to judge, Lord, quick to understand, and always ready to be tolerant. Amen

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