

Thoughts from the Manse 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020

I was thinking about fountains this week, and those I had seen which had stuck in my mind. I remember watching 'The Champions' in the late 1960's with its opening titles featuring the fountain at Geneva. It seemed spectacular. Many years later, in the 1990's I visited Geneva and it is spectacular, soaring 460 feet into the air and pumping 500 litres of water per second.



Fountains draw crowds, think of the Trevi fountain in Rome, the coins on the base reflecting the hopes and wishes of thousands of people through the years. Of course, there are natural fountains, geysers, to be found around the world this is a vent in the Earth's surface that periodically ejects a column of hot water and steam. A powerful expression of nature. It is small wonder that then that fountains appear in the bible – Proverbs 13:14 'the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life'; Psalm 36:9 'for with you is the fountain of life'; and in Revelation 21:6 'the springs of the water of life' is surely a reference to a fountain. There are other references and of course water is an essential symbol of life.



We marvel at fountains, a few weeks ago on Gardner's World there was a visit to Alton Towers, not the modern theme park but the original theme park which was a spectacular garden created to be a place of leisure and wonder for people to visit. It is filled with features and one of the ones shown was the newly refurbished Pagoda Fountain which sits in the valley and lifts the eyes heavenward to the canopy of trees around. It is magnificent.

Over recent decades fountains have been created as playthings. We visited Parc de Citroen in Paris and played in the pavement fountain. It is a game of jeopardy as the multiple fountains erupt from the pavement in a complicated pattern and the trick is to get from one side to the other without getting wet. If you are a child, of course, the trick is often to get wet and youngsters squeal with delight when a fountain erupts, and they are caught. Another expression of the water of life.



Many fountains are decorative features of planned gardens, a moment to pause on a tour and marvel at the power of water and to be reminded of its refreshing nature. Jeremiah took a slightly different view of fountains (Jeremiah 9:1) when he talked about a fountain of tears crying for the lost, which reminds us of the power and depth of grief and also the overwhelming love of God who in the heart of creation grieves over all loss of whatever nature. Fountains are powerful symbols.



Flowing upwards, a symbol of hope,  
our eyes are drawn to this powerful jet of water.  
Unconsciously we are mesmerised  
by the patterns of light reflecting on droplets,  
nuanced by technology but mirroring nature.  
Thank you, God, for your Spirit  
which inspires us to explore,  
and to stop and wonder,  
as we search for meaning in everyday life.  
In fountains we find pleasure,  
but going deeper we find a reminder of the power of  
creation  
and the purpose of life.  
Like children, may we play in your presence,  
sometimes shocked  
and sometimes startled  
but always knowing the joy of being with you,  
as your love flows over us like the pouring of a fountain.

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