

Dear friend

Today in the church, we celebrate the life of Joseph Butler, (1692-1752), Bishop of Durham. Butler was a philosopher of some influence, particularly concerned with the conscience and morality.

It strikes me at the moment that morality is an issue we should be considering. We have been through the discussion during lockdown of whether or not the rules had been applied equally to everyone, whether or not certain sectors were permitted to break rules without penalty. Whichever side of that debate you end up in line with, there is no getting away from the fact that individual morality is of the utmost importance here.



The moral judgement of those who have the power to arrest, and even to physically harm, others and then consider it is right for them to use that power to the ultimate extreme is also in question. There will be those of us who have strong opinions about the mass public protests taking place – whether it is acceptable to break the lockdown rules for such reasons is a question of individual morality. The biggest question in my household at present is the issue of glorifying people from our past who profited from slavery and what to do with the statues so that no offence is caused.

What is certain is that we will not all agree completely on each and every one of these issues. As Christians, where we go from there is to a place of love and acceptance, an understanding that we are all different and are created in the image of God for a reason, that our role is to ask questions that help us to understand another's point of view even when it is diametrically opposed to ours and still love that person for who they are.

This week we are starting to open our church building for private prayer – a first and very tentative step towards being able to worship other than in our own homes again. There is naturally a lot of anxiety about this, as there is anxiety about our shops being open, travelling on public transport and meeting our loved ones face to face again. All these things can lead to a general state of despair, if we let it.

It seems to me that Joseph Butler has something pertinent to say to us today:

*“As this world was not intended to be a state of any great satisfaction, or high enjoyment, so neither was it intended to be a mere scene of unhappiness and sorrow.”*

My prayer for you this day is that you find some way to lift the general state of unhappiness you find in your particular world through sharing the love of Christ with those around you – however you consider it morally (and legally!) acceptable to do.

With every blessing

Linda