

St Luke's day - Luke the gospel writer, Luke the physician. On this day when the church thinks of healing, we bring justice to mind in this judges' service.

The diarist Harold Nicolson told this story in his Entry of 2 May 1946:

Lord and Lady Lawrence come to dinner. Lady Lawrence tells me that the most dramatic moment in the trial was when they turned on a film showing the trial by Nazi justice of some wretched young man who had been involved in an attempt on Hitler's life. The judge yelled at him, pointing accusing fingers, shouting, 'You beast! You brute! You traitor!' The sound of his objurgations echoed through the courtroom, rising in the end almost to a scream. Then the film stopped, the lights went up, and the gentle voice of Lord Lawrence intervened: 'Please continue your examination Dr Dix'. The contrast between violence and calm was such that even the defendants moved uneasily upon their hard and narrow bench.

Of what is this story a foretaste and an exemplar? Of justice driven by peace, and by listening.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus said: Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

Peace, shalom, a holistic vision within & beyond the individual.

Cornelius Plantinga: "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfilment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom."

The use of shalom in the Scriptures always points towards that transcendent action of wholeness. Shalom is seen in reference to the wellbeing of others (Genesis 43.27, Exodus 4.18), to treaties (1 Kings 5.12), and in prayer for the wellbeing of cities or nations (Psalm 122.6, Jeremiah 29.7)

This all-embracing understanding of peace brings justice together with healing. Indeed in this understanding, justice is a form of healing.

This understanding of justice as a dimension of the rightly ordered world sits alongside, complements and sometimes critiques other understandings of the word.

Justice as technique. Similar to medicine as a technique. Luke (the physician): "She spent all she had on doctors". My experience in Wycombe hospital lift: "God doesn't think he's a doctor". These jokes, and lawyer jokes, and the sense of disillusionment with experts which brackets solicitors and barristers with motor mechanics who suck their teeth are an expression of our discontent with the flattening of shalom to machinery.

Far more fruitful is justice as hope. We know in this city the motivating power of the search for justice: "Justice for the 96", "Justice for the poor", our own Diocesan call: "More people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world". As the judges here know better than all of us, this yearning and striving for justice can seek to prescribe that future and force the present into its mould; yet with calm openness to the future there can be liberation in the passion for justice as hope; we can be surprised by the God who opens us to a future we never dreamed.

This understanding of justice as a form of healing, coming to us from a redeemed future, is central to the teaching of the churches. So the Catechism of the Catholic Church has this: "Punishment for a crime, in addition to

defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: As far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party."

This in-breaking of the future may be described as restorative justice, but its hope and its scope goes far beyond that, into a social and personal healing that can embrace victims and criminals in a redeemed future.

The Gachacha courts of Rwanda, in which village elders seek to bring truth and reconciliation to the unimaginably painful aftermath of a genocide in which neighbours sought to slaughter neighbours, is an example of this in-breaking. Other examples are closer to home. Joanne Berry is on such example.

Kate and I knew Jo Berry in the early 1980s and worked with her for a while in what was then called the Ecology Party. In 1984 her father Anthony, a Conservative MP, was killed in the Brighton hotel bombing at the Conservative party conference. A man named Patrick Magee, was caught, tried and sentenced for his part in planting the Brighton bomb and released as part of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1999. Jo met him for the first time in November 2000 at a friend's house in Dublin. Her intention was to meet once and hear his story so that she could experience him as a human being rather than a faceless enemy.

From this meeting, to the surprise of Jo and of Pat Magee, both developed a relationship of mutual commitment to peace making. Patrick Magee and Jo Berry have shared a platform over 100 times including in Northern Ireland and in Rwanda. In this matter justice was done, but the future no one dreamed of was a matter of healing also, and of restoration. In the wilderness of grief and loss, a resource for healing flowered. This is the hope of shalom.

As today's reading from the Hebrew scriptures foresaw:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

But you who represent our desire for justice, and who work for and stand for justice, you know the difficulty of it. Nicolson's calm voice is not that of a robot, or indeed a saint, but of a disciplined judge. And you in this cathedral church today know, more than any gathering in the north-west this morning, the disciplined cost of justice. As we look at justice and peace, at the Hebrew vision of shalom, we see that this too is in the root of the word.

Shalom comes from the root verb shalom meaning to be complete, perfect and full. In modern Hebrew the related word Shelem means to pay for, and Shulam means to be fully paid. Hence in Hebrew one can jokingly say that, "when it's paid-for then there is peace."

Your own hard work is part of that payment. But there is a spiritual and a cosmic dimension too, to the idea that peace needs to be paid for.

In this Cathedral church of Christ we too believe that when it's paid-for then there is peace. Christian theories of the Atonement are manifold and rich, but they all point to the way our peace is paid-for, to the cross of Christ, the calm Christ of the Middle Ages or the outraged and agonised Christ as the Cathedral's new sculpture would have it, and the Cross speaks of the peace which cost our Lord blood but which comes to us as free gift.

More people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world. For a Christian preacher that is the shalom we seek. It may be close to the shalom you seek, or it may be identical with it. Whichever of these is true, I believe, and I think that you too believe, that the legal process can be a form of healing. It is good for Christians, and all those of goodwill, to be in partnership with all of you as we seek that surprising, wholesome, all-embracing peace together.