

10th August 2020

Changed

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ...”

Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:51

The Grassmarket is a historic marketplace in the Old Town of Edinburgh, located beneath Edinburgh Castle. Originally a market where grass was sold – hence the name – over the years it has housed a horse-market; been the site of Edinburgh’s executions; the locality of the notorious body-snatchers, Burke and Hare; an area of many taverns, cheap lodging-houses and squalid housing for itinerant labourers; and, in my time in University in the city, a no-go area, a hang-out for many disreputable characters. In the 1970s, however, the Grassmarket began to lose its association with poverty and underwent several decades of “gentrification”. It is now a delightful part of the city and a magnet for visitors, especially during the Edinburgh Festival. And in today’s Grassmarket, lives are being changed.

The Grassmarket Community Project (<http://grassmarket.org/>), a partnership between Greyfriars Church of Scotland and the Grassmarket Mission (founded in 1890), provides sanctuary and support for some of Edinburgh’s most vulnerable people. The Project helps participants develop their full potential and move away from cycles of failure, through a community café; woodwork and tartan social enterprises; cookery and baking classes; art, drama and IT; reading and writing; sewing and photography; a drop-in free meal service on a Monday evening ...

You can gentrify buildings, but when lives need to be changed, and there are people committed to the support and nurture of those in most need, then a whole city and *all* of its people are changed as a result.

St Paul said, “We shall all be changed, in a moment.” Of course, this was about the “end times”, when God’s heavenly Kingdom would come. But if lives are changed *now*, not in the twinkling of an eye, but through the dedication of the people like those in the Grassmarket Community Project, is that not a glimpse of the Kingdom of God here in our city?

A prayer for today

*“Mould me and make me, after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.”
Loving God, change me, renew me, use me, for your Kingdom here and now. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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