

11th August 2020

Fringes

**“Foolish fanatics ... the men who form the lunatic fringe
in all reform movements.”**

Theodore Roosevelt, Autobiography, 1913

Though he didn't coin the term, Theodore Roosevelt did much to bring the label of "the lunatic fringe" into common usage. It's a description that usually relates to politics. Those who take up an extreme position, on the right or the left, who don't carry the majority of the people with them (and don't give a hoot) are labelled "extremists", "fanatics", "radicals", "revolutionaries", and the like, on the fringes – and lunatics to boot!

In the midst of a crowd, Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me?" A strange question, as a jostling mob moved through narrow city streets. But a woman who'd been unwell for many years was holding onto the hem of his cloak. This was no lunatic, no foolish fanatic, but someone for whom the fringe of a garment was as close as she could get. But her faith was enough for Jesus, who gave her the fullness of life she sought.

As I reflected yesterday on the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh, I began to think of all the people who live on the fringes of our society: the fringes of reason, of acceptance, of coping, of attainment, of functioning. We should be more aware and understanding, just as Jesus was, of those who live on the fringes, as much as we're aware of the people in the centre of things – and perhaps, even more so.

Through the month of August, Edinburgh would normally be teeming with people, here for the Edinburgh International Festival. But around the "official" Festival there is also The Fringe, hundreds of shows, plays, comedy, street-theatre – in the Grassmarket and every nook and cranny of the city. The Festival and The Fringe go hand in hand, engaging with all facets of society, allowing everyone to feel included, those in the centre and those on the fringes, celebrating life in all its vibrant fullness.

The people on the fringes of things really matter. And when they are recognised and accepted, everyone has a festival to celebrate.

A prayer for today

Lord, help me be aware of the people on the fringes of my festival of life.

And, if I'm on the fringes, please can I be included? Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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