

20th January 2021

Impossible?

**“It is not a lucky word, this same impossible;
no good comes from those that have it so often in their mouth.”**

Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution, A History

Sometimes you just have to stop what you are doing and be amazed. Monday was one of those days. I'd watched TV news coverage of staff in an Intensive Care Unit of a major London hospital coping with the influx of Covid patients, almost overwhelmed, yet committed to their vital work no matter how hard. "These patients are not grandparents," a Consultant said. "They are the parents of school-age children. We're seeing more of this age-group now." Yet, together the staff keep going. Together, they look out for one another. Together they could be caring for you and me.

I was just absorbing this when the scene changed. And there was news footage of climbers, in the horrors of a Nepalese winter, conquering the summit of K2, the second highest mountain in the world, only 200 metres shorter than Everest. K2 is known as "The Savage Mountain" after George Bell, a climber on the 1953 American expedition, had told reporters, "It's a savage mountain that tries to kill you." On Saturday 16th January, three teams of climbers got to the summit of K2 for the first time in winter. But the three teams finished the climb together. Together they shared the glory. One of the Nepalese climbers, a mountaineer and former Ghurkha soldier, Nirmal (Nims) Purja MBE, said: "Arm in arm we did this. We stuck by each other and made the impossible possible".

Thomas Carlyle was right. No good comes from those who have the word "impossible" so often in their mouths. Whether the "impossible" tag is given to the heights of K2 or the horrors of an ICU full of Covid patients, as Nims Purja has said, together we can make the impossible possible.

Today, we are all on a savage winter climb, in our hospitals and in our homes, in the corridors of power and the aisles of our supermarkets, in the GP surgeries and the vaccination centres, different teams, but the same task. Together, arm in arm; together, supporting one another; together, making the impossible possible. Together ...

A prayer for today

Lord, be with those who have heights to climb, every day, to care for us all. Amen

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