

8th February 2021

Voice

“Am in Market Harborough. Where ought I to be?”

G K Chesterton, in a telegram sent to his wife in London

This “Thought for the Day” and concluding prayer is a co-production, based on a pre-pandemic story from one of my daughters, about the importance of people finding their voice. Go for it, Kathryn!

I’m on the bus in Edinburgh, single-decker, the Bridges to Murrayfield, with Prince's Street open again to buses – apart from the section at the foot of the Mound where they've decided to park a *stupid* tram so that people can go and have a look, thus blocking one lane of traffic. Anyhow, we pass Princes Mall above Waverley station as normal, then the bus hitches a right at St Andrew's Square, not its normal route. I check out the window, and sure enough there are more road works kicking off on Princes Street. I’m thinking ... *Well, whatever. It's back to the George Street route they used during the tram-works, adding at least ten minutes to my journey. Oh, joy of joys!*

Meanwhile, there's an autistic lad sitting across the aisle – and he pretty much flips. Well, not physically, but he’s doing what I believe every single person wants to do in that situation. He says, very loudly: WHERE WE GOING? *Fair enough*, I think. *You mess up a bus route, someone is going to flip out.* But he doesn't just say this once, he repeats it over and over, getting louder and faster, a bit like a broken record. I have my iPod on, so I don’t hear anyone's answer. He’s relentless. But rather than get annoyed, I love it. WHERE WE GOING? WHERE WE GOING? WHERE WE GOING? His head is flailing frantically from side to side. But by the time we’re halfway along George Street, he's calmed down. He must have received a reasonable explanation from the folk he’s sitting close to. He then proceeds to say a polite goodbye to everyone who gets off the bus.

Why did I like this? I think we humans are far too polite most of the time, particularly in the face of disruption. We just accept that shit is happening to us and don't complain. So, next time someone disrupts my bus route (metaphorically speaking) I’m considering shouting WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE ARE WE GOING? until I get a reasonable answer.

Maybe we could find our voice too. Even G K Chesterton needed to check out where he was. And, you never know, if we were to ask, “Where are we going?” more often than we do, and loudly enough, we might even get a reasonable answer – from somewhere!

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to find my voice and seek help when I don't know what direction you're taking me. Allow me to trust that you have me on the right path. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom and Kathryn Gordon

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