

19th May 2021

Prepared

**“Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm,
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled.”**

John Milton, Comus, 1637

I'm in trouble ... I've had to deal with some barbs and criticisms following my recent "Thought for the Day" on the theme of "chance". Clearly there are some who take issue with my suggestion that games of chance are legitimate. But I'm not going to be drawn into that debate. I hope we can agree to differ – though I suspect *that* chance will be a fine thing ...

However, it got me thinking about how we deal with "chance" in our lives. We like to think we're in control of things. We make plans, seeking to fulfil our hopes and dreams, and we work hard at getting things right. And then ... something goes wrong, by chance, and, if everything isn't turned upside down, we're forced to make adjustments, large or small: from the planned barbeque that's ruined by a thunderstorm, to the untimely death of someone you love; from the traffic-jam which interrupts your journey, to the arrival of a global pandemic. Chance affects us all.

The poet W B Yeats wrote in *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*:

*But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

Softly? I've had experiences where chance has stomped all over mine ...

How might we handle such chance happenings? We can, as Milton suggests, "hold firm" when we are "surprised by unjust force". Chance happens. It doesn't mean life has turned against us, or that we are targeted by bad things – by divine intervention or anything else. We can find that our virtue – or whatever gives us meaning – can be assailed, but we need never be hurt or destroyed. Simply put, be prepared for chance. Factor in what's considered to be malice, sorcery, or any power which mars our expectations. Chance is a given. Is there any chance we'll understand that?

A prayer for today

*By chance I knew you. By design you loved me.
And with a combination of both, I am at peace. Amen*