

2nd June 2021

Cobwebs

**“I can look sharp as well as another,
and let me alone to keep the cobwebs out of my eyes.”**

Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quijote de la Mancha

I wrote yesterday about an end-of-life conversation with a man who was planning his own funeral. But that wasn't the only part of our discussion. There were other things to explore. The way he put it to me was this: “I need someone to help me clear out my mental attic before I die.”

Anyone who's had to clear a dusty attic, or a cob-web covered cellar, or a garage full of junk will know that tidying is a messy business. When stuff which has lain undisturbed for decades is rummaged through, sorting it out into any kind of tidiness is hard. Mental attics are no different. A dying man knew there was a lot of unexplored stuff to be looked at. But now it was time to do some sorting, and that was a daunting prospect.

There is much I remember in that process. Firstly, this man asked for help. He knew there was too much mess for him to tackle alone. He needed support, and time was short. The second was that, to help him, I had to go into the attic too. I could have refused to go up the Ramsay Ladder and share his arduous task. I could have shouted instructions through the trapdoor. I could even have invited him into my tidy house and suggested he needn't bother about his. But he needed someone to enter *his* world with all its messiness. And the third? Inevitably, some of the cobwebs in his messed-up attic stuck to me. So, each time we parted – and our attic-tidying sessions were over several days – I had to know how to dust myself down and take care of my own well-being. And finally, surprise surprise, having seen the mess of his attic, I discovered I needed to do some sorting of my own. That tidy house of mine, with stuff *I* hadn't looked at for a while, turned out to have an attic that needed tidying too – some messy stuff I may even need help to sort.

Attics to be tidied? Recognising that help might be needed? And, if you're a helper, knowing that it's a messy business for you too, and perhaps even doing some tidying of your own?

Where are you and I with our cobwebs today, I wonder ...?

A prayer for today

*Lord, when I realise some sorting is needed,
help me to know when and where to start. Amen*