

15th December 2021

Dangers

“Danger comes the sooner when it is despised.”

Publilius Syrus, Maxims

I was nearly knocked over by a *Deliveroo* cyclist. I'd stepped out from the kerb as instructed by the helpful “green man”, but I didn't expect a *Deliveroo* driver to run a red light and nearly collide with me. No damage was done to me, the cyclist or the delivery, but *plenty* was done to this pedestrian's peace of mind and even temper. I can't remember what I said. (And if I could, it's probably best that I don't recount it here.) But I *can* remember how I felt, because danger has that effect on you, doesn't it?

Publilius Syrus was a Latin writer from the last century BC. A Syrian, brought to Italy as a slave, by his wit and talent he'd won the favour of his master, who freed him from slavery and educated him to the standard expected in Rome. When he wrote the quote above in his *Maxims*, he was clearly speaking from experience, and, no doubt, kept his wits about him as much when in Rome as in the rigours of his Syrian upbringing and his time in slavery. Dangers abound, he reminds us, as much in freedom as in times of trouble, and as much in the streets of Edinburgh filled with *Deliveroo* cyclists as in Rome peopled by well-behaved citizens.

Consider, for example, the dangers that lurk in complacency. This was at the core of Syrus's thinking. When danger “is despised”, when we stop being vigilant and become comfortable with an “I'm alright” attitude, we run the risk of dangers taking us by surprise. Was that not my problem at an Edinburgh street-crossing? And might we become complacent in the run-up to Christmas with all that's around us?

Taking a Christian course for your life is, in all measurements, a good thing. It's our spiritual redemption from the slavery of “self and sin”, as the Bible puts it, and offers the freedoms of a new way of being. But dangers still abound. A decision to follow a Christian path is not, and should never be, a once-and-for all moment, when we will always be protected from the pressures of our world. The Incarnation isn't just for Christmas!

Dangers are still around. Don't despise them. Keep a look out. You never know when the next *Deliveroo* cyclist might be heading your way!

A prayer for today

Keep me watchful, Lord, for your guidance and the world's dangers. Amen