

26th December 2021

Boxes

**“Little boxes on the hillside ...
And they’re all made out of ticky-tacky
And they all look just the same.”**

Malvina Reynolds, Little Boxes

As I write this – mid-way through Christmas morning – I’m surrounded by boxes, empty boxes, all of which have contained lovely gifts which the family have just shared. In a while, they’ll be added to a host of other boxes which are languishing in our garage, wating to be put out for East Lothian Council’s excellent recycling service early next week.

When the American songwriter, Malvina Reynolds, wrote “Little Boxes”, a song made famous by the legendary Pete Seeger in the early 1960s, she was referring to the tract of houses in the hills to the south of San Francisco. Every house looked the same, she said, “little boxes on the hillside”, taking over the world. Given the proliferation of boxes that have come into our household in the past year because of home-shopping and deliveries of all kinds of things, and added to because of this morning’s Christmas gifts, I reckon boxes are about to take over *my* world. Not made from ticky-tacky, not on a hillside, but constructed from cardboard, and in my house and garage. Boxes galore to deal with.

On Christmas Day we reflect on the precious gift of Christ our Lord. This gift will remain with us, through Boxing Day and beyond, for it is the best gift of all. But what about the box it came in? What about the story that conveys the meaning of the Incarnation, the wrapping of the symbolism of God in human form, enclosed in the trappings of ordinary human life? What about the labels of the worshipping angels, the colourful ribbons of the Maji’s gifts, the shiny paper of adoring shepherds? What about the carols and the nativity scenes, the choirs and the twinkling lights? What about the familiarity, the tradition, the comfortable?

Don’t discard these boxes. Don’t throw away *all* that carried the message of Christmas for you this year. *Your* “little boxes” are not made from “ticky tacky”. For they will have significance too, meaning that you might need again and again. Don’t chuck out your boxes on Boxing Day.

A prayer for today

*The meaning is in the message. Now I have the meaning,
help me to hold on to message that conveyed it to me. Amen.*