

16th October 2022

Hidden

**"Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is the man
who hides one thing in his heart and speaks another."**

Homer, *Iliad* (Book IX)

When I was a minister in Glasgow's Easterhouse, there were monthly "discos" in the church hall to offer social life to the local kids. My boss – a streetwise minister – was always on door-duty, mostly to ensure that no one carried alcohol. "There's no point in checking their jacket pockets for tell-tale bulges," he warned me. "They're too fly for that. The half-bottle of Vodka will be tucked into a sock, beneath the jeans, on the inside of the calf. That's where it can be hidden best." The kids got wise to our insider-knowledge, though, and got the girls to secrete the offending half-bottles in other places – but that's a whole different story. "Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is the teenager who hides one thing down his sock and speaks another," to paraphrase the quote above. ('What? Me, minister? You know I wouldn't try to bring alcohol in here ...' kind of thing).

Hiding booze in your sock is one thing, hiding a private life is quite another. A young man I knew – a family man, with two beautiful children and a steady job – confessed to a hidden life. He had an addiction problem and needed help. Blind-drunk over most of the New Year, he'd threatened to smash an empty bottle on his mother's face. To cut a long story short, now that the hidden life could no longer be hidden, he put himself under the wing of Alcoholics Anonymous. I cannot speak highly enough of AA. They were his salvation. That's forty years ago. I pray to God that there are no more hidden parts of that man's life to be explored.

His hidden life was *never* as "hateful to me as the Gates of Hades", but it had to be faced honestly and dealt with compassionately. That wasn't easy, but it was necessary if he was to get help. So pray today for those who have a hidden life, that they might be able to face up to it and, in time, ask for help. And don't be too quick to judge. For none of us can confess to being completely open and honest about everything. And if we are one of those who hides one thing in our heart (or even down our sock) and speaks another, maybe it's time we dealt with our hidden things.

A prayer for today

*Lord, when I try to hide things from myself
help me to remember they can't be hidden from you. Amen*