

7th March 2023

Lemons

"The words you've bandied are sufficient; 'tis deeds that I prefer to see."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*.

I came across a review of a new play from London's West End, called *Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons* – a "tender and funny rom-com about what we say, how we say it and what happens when we can't say it anymore." Starring Jenna Coleman and Aidan Turner, the play by Sam Steiner sees a married couple dealing with a state-imposed "hush law" which limits a person's spoken word-count. When you expect to speak more than 123 million words in a lifetime, how do you cope when you're allowed only 140 spoken words a day? What do you do when words run out? How do you learn to limit words, like a spoken version of *Twitter*? "The script," the *Guardian* reviewer tells us, "has deft scenes that show how ... apparent banalities [like "lemons lemons lemons lemons lemons", I assume] can carry value and meaning ... As the couple hit the buffers of wordlessness ... their relationship gathers power ... The actors drop their rom-com routine and become more real and tender." (See www.theguardian.com/stage/2023/feb/01/all)

As someone who has seldom, if ever, "hit the buffers of wordlessness", I was challenged by the concept that underpins this play. Do I rely on words more than I should? How do I communicate beyond the spoken word? What nonverbal signals might I learn to pick up from others? If words are a communication tool, how are they enhanced, or detracted from, by other forms of communication?

I was once a witness at a marriage in my hospice, where the young man being married couldn't speak, his cancer having necessitated the removal of his vocal cords. For the vows, the bride spoke her words boldly. When the groom was to assent to the words of *his* marriage vow, he gave the "thumbs up" with both hands, nodded vigorously and wore the biggest smile. 140 words weren't needed. His whole being said it all.

How can we *show* what we mean as well as say what we mean? When Goethe says "'tis deeds that I prefer to see", might that be addressed to you and me? I really hope our answer isn't a lemon ...

A prayer for today

"Love must be genuine and show itself in action", a Letter of John says.

Goodness, Lord! That must mean me! Amen