19th June 2026

Discomfort

"They reward me evil for good: to the great discomfort of my soul."

Bible, *Psalm 35:17*

At the beginning of May, I had my "Spring Booster Covid Jag". Given that this is offered to everyone over the age of seventy-five, and choosing not to bypass anything useful that's on offer, I arranged an appointment and got the inoculation. "Your arm may be tender for a bit," the nurse said. "Yes," I replied. "Last time I had a Covid jag in one arm and a Flu jag in the other. And *both* arms were sore. At least this time I can sleep on my right side if my left arm is painful. I should get a decent night's sleep."

I was wrong! Notwithstanding I only had one sore arm, it was *much* sorer than before. I tossed and turned all night. I just couldn't settle. It's a long time since I've experienced such discomfort.

Physical discomfort is hard to bear. In a day or so, mine passed, and my sleep patterns were back to normal. But it's not so easy with chronic pain: the toothache that consumes every waking moment; the back-spasms that are debilitating; the hip-pain that restricts mobility while you're on a waiting list for a hip replacement. The catalogue is endless. You'll have your stories as I have mine. No one likes physical discomfort.

But what about what the Psalmist describes as "the great discomfort of my soul"? What about spiritual discomfort, ethical discomfort, social discomfort? What about people and circumstances that "reward me evil for good"? The discomfort of illegal and unjustifiable wars; the discomfort of Antisemitism; the discomfort of environmental destruction; the discomfort of social inequality; the discomfort of domestic violence? Should these discomforts of the soul, these chronic ills, not be complained about too – even more than the discomfort of my painful arm?

When we are rewarded evil for good, we *should* be discomforted. And our personal discomfort should cause us to complain, not only about ourselves, but to cry out on behalf of the whole of humanity – and especially those whose discomforting cries are rarely listened to.

So, the next time I have a sore arm and feel I have cause to complain, perhaps I should give more thought to "the great discomfort of my soul" caused by the world's evils. For that *should* cause me sleepless nights.

A prayer for today

May my discomfort lead to awareness, awareness to action, and action to compassion.

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