

Mike's message



History is all around us.

History is all around us. That thought has occurred too me time and time again over the last 16 months or so since Covid19 restrictions started.

For one reason it's because I've been producing weekly videos, reflecting on the week's biblical theme, and often drawing on local history to emphasis the theme. For another reason because latterly I've started trying to walk 10,000 steps most days (around five miles), and when you're out walking you see things you certainly wouldn't see when driving.

In Kings Norton of course there are the large prominent historic buildings around, and including, St Nicolas Church. Delve deeply and they are linked to both the 15th century wool trade and, in several different ways, the 17th century English Civil War. Down the road from there the early 19th century Guillotine Locks can be found and there's also the site, although not marked, of where the Royal Mint produced coins early in the 20th century. There are smaller signs too, the marks where ropes have dug into bridge arches while pulling narrowboats along the canal. Small and large, history leaves its mark.

History is all around us, and not just geographically. It's around us in the sense of time too. History is being made as we speak. We read and learn about Tudors and Stuarts, Black Death and Civil War. Doubtless future generations will read about the Covid19 Pandemic. What will they make of these times? What will be the legacy that we leave as we hopefully emerge from them.

The events of history are so often just written by either the victors, in the case of war, or the rich and powerful, in the case of virtually everything else. You have to dig deep sometimes to find the truth. That's what lies behind much of the discussion about statues for example. People portrayed as 'the great and good' sometimes hide appalling atrocities committed by them or in their name. This isn't 'rewriting history' as some claim, it's rather revealing the truths buried in history. The legacy of Clive of India including statues in Shrewsbury and on Whitehall aren't only controversial today. It's shocking they were erected in the first place. Samuel Johnson, commenting on Clive's suspicious death said that he "had acquired his fortune by such crimes that his consciousness of them impelled him to cut his own throat". MPs impeached him from his role in the East India Company. But this isn't just about the past, Clive of India's pet tortoise only died in a Kolkata Zoo in 2006 (aged somewhere between 150 and 250!). History is that close. In fact closer. The poisoned legacy of atrocities of the past lives in the conflicts, hardships and injustices that millions face today. We live with history; warts and all.

What legacy of history will we leave for future generations? How will history remember us and the days of Covid19? History is indeed all around. We can write it, lets hope future generations have cause to remember us well..