

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

The Bigger Picture



Dear Friends,

"A Bigger Picture" was the title of the David Hockney exhibition at the Royal Academy whence Doug and I were taken by two good friends to see the reality of his creativity a couple of months ago. Much of the artwork had been created especially to be shown in this way, and the sheer size of the paintings was very unusual, almost like walking into a scene.

David Hockney has been associated with modernist painting for most of his life being based in the United States and Los Angeles in particular. However, he returned to Yorkshire, where he was born, when a close friend was dying of cancer. He began to paint the villages, fields and trees around him and he rediscovered the beauty of the area. He now lives in Yorkshire and has a large studio in which he produces paintings unless he has painted them out in the countryside itself.

Many of the paintings can be viewed free on www.hockneypictures.com though you will not quite have the sense of the sheer size of the paintings. One of the most impressive rooms at the Royal Academy contained four paintings of the same scene at each season of the year. The view was recognisably the same, but also remarkably different. It was like seeing the fullness of the scene, certainly, and it served to remind us that even the views which we see day by day are gradually changing. Other paintings were of a lane with trees on each side, which may be called a "tunnel": since seeing that our eyes have been opened to the changing beauty even at the side of our local roads. They may not be country lanes – certainly not the A414! – but there can be beauty day by day to value. Bushes

and hedges with white or yellow blossom have begun to stand out to beautify the day – and last month we even noticed again the wonderful daffodils which greeted the myriad of cars and lorries approaching Hertford's first roundabout from the West.

The paintings have opened our eyes to extra beauties around us. We have noticed the changing seasons in a positive way, realising that a frozen scene has its own beauty. However, this is not being done by traditional landscape painting (such as John Constable) but in a unique modern style. Not only that, Hockney uses modern technology to create scenes in a smaller format. From the large paintings he goes to the opposite extreme by using an iPad which he often sends electronically to suitable acquaintances. Many of these had been enlarged and framed for the exhibition, and one room featured perhaps fifty such pictures, presented through from January to December.

The pictures are beautiful in themselves, but they also alert us to the beauty in the everyday, that delightful views can be seen almost everywhere – if we notice, busy people that we are. They also speak of the passing of time; that as months and years change there are many valuable and joyful things to experience. It can be poignant and wonderful. Hockney's artistic eye has really opened up a new way of seeing, of noticing and valuing, the world around us.

Faith in God should open our eyes to the beauty of the world, and to the wonderful, positive things in human life. Faith can lead us to value things more, from the loveliness of a natural scene to the joy of everyday human care, concern and love.

It is not there to limit our vision or cause us to enter a removed (and supposedly holier?) area of life, but to see the eternal in the everyday, to gain an extra perspective on life. Jesus called people to look at the beauties of nature and to realise that there is a Divine hand at work – not a literal hand, of course, but a realisation that there is a depth to our existence, more to the picture than meets the eye immediately. We have the impression that Hockney's return to his native Yorkshire has led him to re-evaluate his perception of the place where he was born, and he has seen a new wonder in things he once moved away from.

People of faith are sometimes criticised for narrowness of vision, as if they retreat from the world, perhaps wanting to hold back the years, stifling progress. This can happen and of course we need to learn from the past and hold to valuable traditions rather than washing them away.

However, genuine faith in God accepts that God is ever active in the world and in human life, and we look for new indications of God's presence and love. So, if we recognise that so much has changed, and changes will continue, we need to feel through where God is now for us, to know that He is with us as the world changes.

Our lives can be very focussed on a certain set of things, perhaps money and possessions, relationships or family, or hobbies and pastimes, which may be fine in themselves, but they can limit our spirituality.

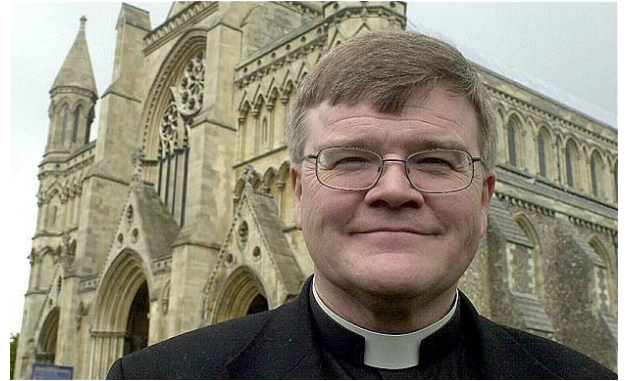
Faith in God puts us touch with a wider reality which may call us to notice and engage with other things, giving a positive purpose in what we are already doing as well as taking us forward into the future. Faith should give us all A Bigger Picture of our lives and our world, for when we really devote ourselves to living God's love, we have the greatest possible vision for our own lives and for everything around us.

Love

Jo and Doug

Pentecost 27th May

The main morning service at 10:00 am on Sunday 27th May will be a Team Eucharist when we will be joined by the clergy and congregation of all the churches in the Hertford Team.



The guest preacher will be the Very Rev Dr Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans.

Diamond Jubilee 3rd June



We will be holding events to mark the Diamond Jubilee, including a Lunch in St John's Hall on Sunday 3rd June, followed by a service in the Castle grounds at 3:00 pm.

You might like to use the following prayer – especially written by the Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral:

God of time and eternity, whose Son reigns as servant, not master; we give you thanks and praise that you have blessed this Nation, the Realms and Territories with Elizabeth our beloved and glorious Queen.

In this year of Jubilee, grant her your gifts of love and joy and peace as she continues in faithful obedience to you, her Lord and God and in devoted service to her lands and peoples, and those of the Commonwealth, now and all the days of her life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.