

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Thrones, struggles and love

Dear Friends,

"It's a Game of Thrones" said the football commentator. "No it isn't!" I said uselessly to the screen. It struck me as a classic piece of nonsense with nothing to do with the European Cup Final between Barcelona and Juventus. Perhaps he was trying to sound in touch with those who watch the long-running – and very popular – fantasy series. It didn't work for me, but it did give me cause for thought; was it just an off-the-cuff remark based on the word "Game" with hints of a power struggle? I suspect it was, but perhaps it went deeper.

It could be that subconsciously he was aware that both football and the Thrones series are a form of entertainment and spectacle produced and promoted by the mass media, not least by powerful television networks. They provide an illusion of heroic struggle between two groups of people and we become caught up in the drama.

We all tend to have our expectation and hope that the right side will win, in football, in stories – and in life in general. Perhaps the game was reflecting the drama of life, which we all encounter when our own self-determination needs to lead to a life that is valuable and fulfilling, where we triumph over all that holds us back.

The football commentator, were he a Christian, might find himself saying of our faith that it is a game of thrones. Again he might be trying to sound contemporary with his audience (and aren't I?) but he might have reflected on the struggle to live

as we are called to do, and our ultimate purpose and hope.

The struggle that we have is against what we call sin, that side of us which cannot live up to its ideals and constantly falls short of the loving and serving goals for which we aim. We all live on a yellow card in that sense, for we need to be alert to that so that we can continue to live God's way rather than surrendering to unworthy or evil impulses. In a challenging world where we can find that despite doing our best there are forces working against us, within us as well as outside us, we need to stay close to God so that we are guided by his love.

Christianity is often criticised for its rules, sometimes rightly in my view when we are judgmental rather than loving, but football has its rules, which it maintains and occasionally adjusts. I am, of course, talking about the rules of the game rather than the corruption of FIFA, the ruling body. That's a whole different ball – or thrones - game!

When it comes to our highest ideals, we are talking about our greatest aspirations being central to all we do. This means loving God, and loving our neighbour as ourselves, and this is surely what we mean when we describe God as a King, that we enthrone him at the centre of our life and being. We live God's way, and among all the difficulties which life throws at us personally, and which we see in the world's ongoing problems, we believe that God's love is ultimately the right way to live and that this love will triumph in the end.

Love Jo