

Ministerial Meandering - 16th - 22nd August, 2021.

I've been watching a British drama series called 'Spooks' on Amazon Prime recently. It's about an MI5 intelligence unit in London. The plots are good and the acting as well, but one of the things that has come out of it for me is the difficulty of knowing who to trust in the world of espionage.

A number of episodes have had us guessing whether someone you regarded as totally trustworthy and honest, and the last person in the world to betray his friends or his country, suddenly comes under the microscope in what seems the most unlikely scenario.

It's all good drama, of course, and usually - but not always - the person under suspicion is exonerated, and all ends well. Usually.

Not long ago, when we were still on the farm in Mission and I was attending AA rooms there, I helped out a young woman financially who was apparently struggling to make ends meet. She was effusive in her thanks, and promised faithfully to pay me back 'the next day'. I trusted her, but the next day, she told me that she had to go into Abbotsford Hospital because she had Covid. This wasn't unlikely, so I believed her.

After several days and multiple attempts to contact her on her phone by leaving messages and sending texts, I tried contacting her through her son. No response at all.

Somewhat worried now, I phoned up Abbotsford Hospital to enquire after her, and was told that no-one of her name had ever come to the hospital. I asked if maybe she had been seen in the ER, and transferred on to another hospital if they had been short of beds - but no, there was no record of her ever being seen in any department of the hospital at all - ever.

After a few more attempts to make contact with her through her phone, I gave up and decided that I had been taken for a ride by a con artist. I was a few hundred dollars short, but worse than that, I felt betrayed and humiliated by someone who had professed to be my friend.

Trust is a word that with a change of just one letter and a small shift, turns into ‘truth’. Trust is based on truth, without which it is not worth anything, and becomes a four-letter word - ‘lies.’

Sometimes we make promises that we fully intend to keep, but then find that because of circumstances we hadn’t allowed for, we are unable to follow through. You make an appointment (for example) and then have to break it for one reason or another; do you tell the truth as to why you didn’t keep your promise, or do you make up a more inventive fiction you think will sound better?

Sometimes I plan to keep an appointment, but didn’t write it down and I forget about it entirely. At other times I miss an appointment because I was having a nap. What sort of story can I concoct to convince the other person that it was impossible for me to have made the rendezvous?

On Sunday last, I was being encouraged by the diocese to attend the induction of Miranda Sutherland at Holy Spirit, Whonnock at 5.00 pm. That would have entailed a 4-5 hour round trip right across my dogs’ meal time and evening exercise. I played momentarily with elaborate excuses - because I’m human, and I didn’t want to be seen to be not making the effort for a colleague - and then I told Al Carson (who was to be taking the service) the truth - that Sheila was away in the UK because her mum had just died, and there was no-one I could ask who would be able to manage to feed and exercise my dogs. I actually really wanted to go as I have heard good things about Miranda, and wanted to meet her - but I decided it wasn’t worth putting in a big lie to cover the fact that I wasn’t about to abandon my dogs. Had Sheila been home, I would have gone.

This is not an MM to show you how ruddy marvellous I am, but just that I know I would have felt shabby and dirty if I had told a lie - even about something so trivial. We are encouraged in Matthew 5:37 ‘Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ Anything more comes from the evil one.’

What this means is that you must let your word BE your word; people must be able to trust you.

Alice had to think about it for a moment in the book, ‘Alice in Wonderland’; “Then you should say what you mean,” the March Hare went on. “I do,” Alice hastily replied; “at least—at least I mean what I say—that’s the same thing, you know.”

So when people trust us and our word, they know they are trusting our truth.

Philip+