



THINK ON THESE THINGS..... (our contributor this morning is Michelle Howard)

Readings: Nahum 2:3 - 4 The Fall of Nineveh

“The enemy soldiers carry red shields and wear red uniforms. They are preparing to attack! Their chariots flash like fire! Their horses prance! Chariots dash wildly through the streets, rushing to and fro through the city squares. They flash like torches and dart about like lightning.”

Philippians 4:12 - 13

“ I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learnt this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”

Reflection:

This has been a most unusual year for all of us. Looking back, I don't think I could have envisaged that the first half of the year would mainly be spent in lockdown with everything that I have always taken for granted being temporarily suspended or stopped altogether.

It's only now, with the opportunity to look back and consider a number of things, that it's occurred to me that, certainly for all of my adult life, each year has been structured around something that is fundamentally a part of my life, and which allows me to plan my year usually with absolute certainty.

For those of you who know me well, you may be able to hazard a guess at what I am alluding to. For those of you who don't, I'm referring to the calendar of motor racing events that always start in March and usually end of November, touring the world and along the way crowning that year's World Champion. For me, this carnival of motor racing has occurred year in year out with the same regularity as the structure of my daily routine. Never has there been any deviation, nor has there ever been a complete cessation of activity for well over half the season.

It was only when the first Grand Prix of the year, held in Australia in March, was cancelled the night before qualifying was due to take place that it struck me that I was facing a gaping hole in my life. For as long as I can remember, and my memory goes back to the Lotus 77 John Player Special which raced in 1976 when I was 10 years old, motor racing has been a key element of my life. My sister and I excitedly helped our father build a replica of that racing car and we each of us had a hand in completing it over that long hot summer. Since then, I've seen teams come and go, card designs change, liveries both memorable and bizarre and World Champions a plenty.

But since March there has been nothing. Teams have been forced to furlough staff, engineering development has been shut down and there's not even been any proper gossip to pour over! Now I'm sure most of you are thinking that this is only motor racing, and part of me knows that that is very true, however, all of us have in our own way found our lives to have been put on hold for the last five months and it is only when this happens that you actually get the opportunity to sit and think about what exactly it is that is important in your life.

For me, it's my Faith and my family that always come first, but this strange year has also highlighted for me the value of friendships as well, and actually, though it will seem trivial to most of you, the comforting familiarity of my love of motor racing also plays its own intrinsic part in the equilibrium of my life and without corona virus, I might not have realised that. So, as I sit and

reflect on Paul's words to the Philippians above, I have realised that whilst they were written nearly 2000 years ago, for me and I hope for you also, they still ring true today. Oh, and yes, racing starts again this weekend, in Austria, sadly without any crowds there, but **Hurrah!**

Finally, you're probably wondering why the first Bible verses are there which come from the story of the fall of Nineveh. Well I really felt that I ought to find a Bible quote that at least I could relate to motor racing, so please do forgive me as you conjure up the image of the invading army's fiery chariots blazing through the streets, just as their modern-day equivalents do around Monaco every year!

Breath-Prayer: Lord in this continuing strange time we ask you to be with us and give us the strength and the courage to face up to those challenges which still lie ahead. We ask that your wisdom and guidance be bestowed on those people who clearly fail to understand the seriousness of this pandemic. Help us to better understand how fortunate we are to have your strength and guidance in our lives, and we pray that as people experience the worst aspects of this pandemic, that this draws them nearer to your presence. Amen