

389 Good news, bad news

No, this is not one of those good news/bad news jokes, but I am learning more about what 'Good News' means in practice. Take this illustration that a friend uses when teaching his theological students what constitutes good news:

You hear a siren, look out into the road, and you see an ambulance draw up outside the house opposite. So, is that good news or bad news? Not good!

Now, change the perspective. You are *inside* that house, you hear the siren and you see the ambulance arrive: good news or bad news? A huge relief, right?!

Ten days ago, a dear friend saw an oncologist who told her she was to have an operation in two weeks, to remove a cancerous lump, and she'd have to have radiotherapy. She and her husband were overjoyed, as were we when they told us later that morning. What?!

Once again, it depends on your perspective. At her first meeting, and before some more detailed tests, the oncologist had told them that the growth was cancerous, looked fairly extensive, and would very probably require a radical removal. So a small operation, radiotherapy only, and no chemotherapy, was very, very good news!

Less dramatically, I was pleased and relieved when Sue was given a definite diagnosis of Alzheimer's; finally, we could get access to medical support. OK, there's nothing to stop the progress of the condition, but there are drugs that help in reducing short-term memory problems, and we could begin to learn how to deal with our changed situation.

Over halfway through this article, and I haven't said anything 'spiritual', although I'm growing less happy with that distinction these days – everything is 'of the Spirit', and God is concerned with every aspect of our lives.

So when you tell people about the Alzheimer's, they commiserate – which is fine – but then they often tell you how awful their own experience has been; not helpful! And we watched an old 'Midsomer Murders' last night, and I squirmed as someone shared his bitterness at the loss of his wife through Alzheimer's.

Once again, perspective makes all the difference; we need to see things God's (positive) way. Three years after diagnosis, we're doing really well, and we have everything going for us. We keep physically active and mentally active, and we're in an understanding and supportive community – I could introduce you to almost a dozen people who have Alzheimer's, or who have (or had) close relations affected by it.

I find that the main requirement is patience – and the Lord gives it. The main gain is that we're closer to one another now than ever, and that's 52 years today! We all know the theory about investing time in our close relationships, and it does work. The Good News is all about restoration, both here and now, despite our failing bodies and our selfish ways, and in That Day when heaven comes to earth. What a joy it is to walk with God!

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