

WEEKLY SERMON

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A change of scenery

Last summer we travelled north - far north - nearly as far as you can go in the British Isles in fact. Our destination was the Orkney Islands, an hour and a half's boat ride from the north coast of Scotland following an 8+ hour car journey to get there; split with an overnight stay near Inverness to make it all a bit easier.

The journey was more than worth it. Although I'm a proud Scot I had never travelled to the Orkneys or Shetland Islands. I just hadn't got round to it.

The Orkneys were spectacular - I was delighted to tick them off the bucket list - and the thing that amazed me most was how immediate and present ancient history was wherever you went.

It seemed that around every corner there was a standing stone from 5000 years ago - not to mention ancient settlements and graves older than Stonehenge!

On one occasion, while on a visit to the prehistoric village of Skara Brae, an archaeologist described Orkney to me as a key crossroads of the ancient world.

He went as far as saying that, without the Orkneys, Stonehenge and other ancient monuments wouldn't exist. People visiting the islands took what they had seen there to other parts of ancient Britain and beyond and replicated it.

Never one to shy away from a bit of hyperbole, I built on what the archaeologist had said, describing the Orkneys as being the centre of the neolithic universe. He agreed!

Of course, the people of the Orkneys in those far off times could never have known the influence they were having in places they had never seen or heard of.

But, trust me, with the amazing things we saw while we there they would have had millions of followers on a neolithic Instagram or Twitter!

These days are so used to being connected by phone and online, particularly on social media, that we can't imagine a time when our whole world might be as far as we could physically see, and that's it.

But it happened and it's only in the past 100 years or so that things changed.

Even in Edwardian times people still lived local lives - their village and the next village along might be as far as some would travel.

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Our minds have been expanded hugely since then - whether we realise it or not we all have a global mindset. Someone living in Taiwan is only a few hours flight away from Chorley, while someone living in Lancaster can easily be in California by this time tomorrow. (Covid restrictions permitting of course!)

But while we may have discovered the world properly in the last 100 years or so, God has had a global mindset since the dawn of time. He created the world after all!

He sees every one of us on the planet and knows us all. Even people who don't know Him! He has known every person who has ever lived and ever will live.

He is all knowing and all seeing and yet ... you can still know Him personally.

You probably know the story of how Jesus Christ, God's son, came to Earth and died for us all. And that means today, right now, you can know God through Jesus.

If that sounds incredible to you, don't worry, because I've known Him for years and it still sounds incredible to me!

If you want to find out more ... visit [this page of our Diocesan website](#) to get started; you won't regret it.

And book a trip to the Orkneys soon as well - you won't regret that either.

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