



Pastor's Page

All the time in the world?

It was Friday morning and I was sitting at home drinking a cup of tea and reading a form (as is my want!) when the door bell rang. Out of pure curiosity I went to see who was there. I quickly discovered that it was my next door neighbour. Following the usual greeting she told me that another neighbour, who had been ill for a while had just died. "Oh, I'm very sorry to hear that" I said. "Well, it's the best thing really, at least she's not suffering any more" she replied. I tried to choose my words carefully knowing it was an opportunity to say something about the Lord but also knowing that it would be easy to exploit the situation. I compromised; and the nearest I came to sharing anything remotely gospel was to say, "well its in the Lord's hands." I then offered to help if I could in any way. She continued to talk about the woman who'd died saying that she'd seen her really go "down hill" in the last few weeks. The lady I was talking to had visited our neighbour many times at home and also in hospital and I felt convicted by this as I knew I could have gone to see her more often. The thing that got to me the most though was the fact that for the past couple of weeks I had been planning to go and see her in hospital, but hadn't made it. I had every intention of going on Thursday, but then "other things" cropped up, and I'd resolved to go on Friday! As my neighbour continued to talk about her I said "I was going to go and see her today" ... but as I spoke these words, they just seemed to fall to the ground like dying rain.....

After my neighbour had gone I reflected on the news. I thought about the seven years that I'd lived just a few doors away from this lady who'd died and wondered what kind of neighbour I'd been. I thought too about whether I'd ever really told her about Jesus and his love for her. The answer to that one was easy...No I hadn't!

And why hadn't I? Too busy? Too busy doing what?! What could be more important than telling people about Jesus? Too afraid? Afraid of what? Afraid that she might be offended? What's the bigger tragedy, someone being offended by the gospel or someone never hearing the gospel? (I think I know the answer to that one!) In the end it boils down to how convinced we are by the truth of the Gospel, how committed we are to following Jesus, and how much concern we have for the welfare of other people. The bible says "Preach the Word; and be prepared in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2) Yet we're not all preachers (thank the Lord!) but if we're Christians then we follow in the line of those first disciples who were called and commissioned by Jesus to be his witnesses. (Acts 1:8)

In his classic book *The Screwtape Letters* CS Lewis identifies one of Satan's tactics in terms of evangelism as convincing Christians that they have got all the time in the world. If this truly is a tactic it works on me as I all-too-often put things off until another day. I did this with Edna until Friday when she ran out of days!! Perhaps I'd convinced myself that she had got all the time in the world! But of course she hadn't and neither have you and I. As Jeremiah reminded his people "The harvest is past the summer has ended and we are not saved"

Let's spend the precious time that God gives us sharing with others the greatest gift He ever gave us, Jesus the saviour of the world. And pray that we won't put it off until a day that never comes!

16th September 2007