



Pastor's Page

Jumping to Conclusions

Well it was Sunday so I was in the place that you would expect a Baptist Pastor to be on the Sabbath – the pub! Well I had been in church earlier that day but now was the time for some fellowship of a more raucous nature! Controversial as this might be I actually felt that it would be good to identify with the everyday people in the locality and get a better understanding of their world wrestling with the juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular in a post-modern setting - plus Manchester United were on the big screen!! So off I went. Settling down with my J2O (that's a drink not an Inland Revenue form) I began to watch the game. United were already one goal to the good (I'd missed it – I forgot how long it takes to walk to the pub!) but I did see Manchester City equalise just before half time. So then with the 15 minute break upon us I relaxed a little more and enjoyed the ambience of the venue. In fact I relaxed so much that I briefly 'noddled off' just long enough to miss United's second goal! (The cheering woke me up!) Then I started to concentrate determined that I would not miss the next goal – I didn't, it was scored by Manchester City 2-2. And then with just 15 minutes left young Darren Fletcher headed in what I was convinced was the United's winning goal. Hoorah! I watched nervously as the 'clock ran down' and my team edged closer and closer to victory. And then, unbelievably with practically no time left Manchester City scored a third goal equalling the scores and robbing United of victory. Well I believed it was all over and so started to put my shoes back on (I always take them off for big matches!) rose to my feet and was about to leave when I realised that the referee had added 4 minutes of stoppage time. I watched on as United attacked and attacked but each time they were foiled – the 4 minutes were up. The band in the pub who had been patiently waiting to start their concert looked at me wearily and said "Is it over yet?" "I think so" I said, looking back to the screen one last time only to see Ryan Giggs put out a brilliant pass to the unmarked Michael Owen who did what he does best – fired the ball into the back of the net! I leapt up in the air, nearly knocking my empty glass over and frightening the waiting rock band! Punching the air about three times and saying "unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable" I then realised that the whole pub was watching me. I quickly tried to look ministerial and sober (I was sober I can assure you!) as I started to leave the venue. The lead guitarist in the band said "Did you enjoy that?" "Yes, a good match" I said trying to sound very measured. As I left the Pub no-one there could have been in any doubt as to which team I supported - even if they were in doubt as to my mental stability!

I have a passion for football (one team in particular) and I don't mind who knows. I do often wonder if I have the same passion for Jesus. Would I be just as happy to show my enthusiasm for him in that pub – not worrying what others thought? That really is a genuine challenge for me. The bible is quite clear that we should love God above all else "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27) But Jesus also makes it clear that loving other things is alright ("and love your neighbour as yourself") as long as we love God more. That is very challenging but its also very liberating – I might even jump up and punch the air again!

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