



(picture taken by Jackie Wilson, used with permission)

Monday Musings: August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024.  
Contrasts...

There is a really good series on Netflix that a few friends recommended. It is called *Virgin River*. It is about the lives and relationships among the people who live in a small town called Virgin River. I have seen 3 episodes. Some might say it is more like a soap opera. But below the surface of the stories of the characters, and their relationships, is another story of the relationship between urban and rural living.

In the programme, a professionally trained nurse practitioner and midwife moves to a small town and there experiences the challenges of urban versus rural living: practices, beliefs, and traditions. And as you can imagine, it is a struggle for her as her whole life experience is out of urban settings, universities, big hospitals, and emergency departments, dealing with illnesses and tragic circumstances including traumas from street fights and gunshot wounds. Her new rural landscape is a small town, with a tightly knit people, with their own types of tragic circumstances and traumas and their own ways of working through them. The rural folk believe their way of living is best. Urban folk often believe their way of living is best. Not much has changed through history.

The history of people, and the rise of cities, has always encompassed the differences between urban and rural points of view, traditions and beliefs. They are different ways of living and often there have been challenges and conflicts that have arisen when these two ways, two worlds, come into contact with one another.

The bible also gives stories that tell us of the challenges between people. From the bible we learn of the conflict between and among herders, farmers, hunters, nomads and those who settled as tribes in villages. The bible tells us the story of the rise of civilizations and people migrating, of refugees and wars between nations. The ancient story tellers describe what was happening and how they understood God, and gods, in their way in their time.

We still live in a time when the differences between nations cause wars and when the differences between urban and rural living exist and we encounter differences of opinion, practices, traditions and beliefs as they come together and often in conflict. Should cities spread or build higher? Should farmers farm and industrialization go elsewhere? Do we keep to traditions, what has been, or do we embrace change and what might and can be?

We see these questions come up also with technology, social media, oh and those QR codes! What if you live rurally, with intermittent internet access, and only need a cell

phone occasionally and so never have the latest version? What about schools in an urban centre versus a rural setting? Advantages? Disadvantages? Opportunities for the future for rural kids in urban settings? What about morals, values, and religion too?

I've learned over the last 20 years that the challenges between holding to traditions or embracing new ideas are often felt strongly in our churches as well. What we view as the importance of membership and belonging has changed. The way we celebrate and prepare for Holy Communion and Baptism has changed over the years. What we believe about these sacraments has changed as have the beliefs and expectations around funerals and marriages. And as the church's presence in our communities has diminished, and church attendance declined, we now face differences in beliefs and practices between those who are part of the church and those who have no experience, or little experience, of church life at all. And when these two worlds come into contact, they sometimes collide!

Wherever there are differences, sadly, there is opportunity for misunderstandings, even opposing beliefs and expectations. Sometimes they just collide and go their own ways. However, often the collision causes hurt on one or both sides.

Moving through changing times means we need to prayerfully consider what we let go, what we change ourselves or how much, and what we hold onto because it is, at core, who we are, what believe, and from which we draw our strengths and live in community, with our God.

May the future unfold with gentleness. May we all put kindness first as we seek to listen and understand one another whenever and whatever the circumstances are that bring us together. Peace always,

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Prayer

Holy God, help us to be honest, to be kind, to be love. Amen.

Scripture This Week

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 31-33	David's son Absalom dies.
Psalms 130	Out of the depths I cry to God.
Ephesians 4:25-5:2	Do not let the sun go down on your anger.
John 6:35, 41-51	I am the bread of life.

TR Question (Theological Reflection)

Where is God in the big picture of world history? According to whom?