

Motives, motives, motives

A reflection from the Revd Pam Butler, Alderley Edge Methodist Church

Bible reading: Acts 12.1-23

What a pedigree! King Herod Agrippa was the brother of Herodias who was responsible for the death of John the Baptist. Herod was partly Jewish and had been appointed by the Romans to rule over Palestine which included Galilee, Judea and Samaria. His overriding motive in this job was to please the Jews and solidify his own position. So much for justice! And a reminder to us all to pause and ask ourselves 'What is really motivating me to say or do something? Are my motives pure, or if I am honest, are they sometimes tinged with self interest and the desire to make myself look good?

The disciples of Jesus were not immune to self seeking and wanting to be held in high regard. In Mark 10 verses 35-37 we read of James and John asking Jesus if one of them could sit at his right hand and the other at his left in his glory. That conversation concluded with Jesus saying 'The cup (of suffering) that I drink, you will drink but to sit on my right hand and my left hand is not mine to give.' As we know that suffering came to pass James being executed and John eventually exiled.

Herod seeing how this pleased the Jews and wanting to curry more favour chose when the city was full of Jews for the Passover, to have Peter arrested and put in jail guarded by four squads of soldiers. BUT things didn't exactly go to plan! The intervention of an angel saw Peter freed from prison and Herod looking foolish.

FAITH IN PRAYER?

If we are honest how confident are we that our prayers will be answered?

If the answer to that is vague then we are not alone. Peter, rather than thinking he had actually been freed from prison, thought he was seeing a vision and those actually gathered to pray for Peter's freedom refused to believe the maid when she ran to tell them that Peter was at the door.

A minister once said to me 'When you pray thank God for answering your prayer.' The answer may not be immediate, It may not be as dramatic as Peter's release from jail, it may not be answered in the way we want but it will be answered. What is asked of us all is FAITH, HOPE and TRUST in God.