

Reflection on Matthew 5:1–12 and Windrush Day

Today it is Windrush Day, when we remember and celebrate the contribution of the Windrush generation and reflect honestly on the injustice many experienced. In Bath, as across the country, members of the Windrush community have enriched local life through their work, service, faith, and commitment to their neighbours. Many have worked in our hospitals, caring for patients and supporting the NHS through decades of change and challenge. Their contribution deserves both gratitude and respect. After the Second World War, Britain faced serious labour shortages. People from the Caribbean, who were citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, were invited to come and help rebuild the country. Many answered that call. They came as nurses, cleaners, porters, technicians, drivers, and in many other roles. They contributed greatly to communities such as Bath and to hospitals like this one.

Yet many years later, some members of the Windrush generation suffered a profound injustice. Through failures in record-keeping and changes in immigration policy, people who had every right to live here found themselves questioned, denied services, detained, or even deported. Families were separated, livelihoods lost and trust damaged. The suffering caused was real and remains painful. How are Christians to respond to such wrongs? In the Beatitudes, Jesus speaks of a different way. He calls people blessed not because life is easy, but because they seek God's kingdom even in difficult circumstances. Among these blessings is the promise: ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”***

Peace-making is not the same as ignoring injustice. True peace requires honesty, repentance where wrong has been done, and a

willingness to seek what is right. It involves listening to those who have suffered and recognising their dignity. Peace built on denial is fragile; peace built on truth and mercy can endure.

The Windrush story reminds us how easily people can be hurt when they are treated as problems rather than as neighbours. Jesus consistently saw the person before Him, not a label, category, or stereotype. He calls His followers to do the same. Hospitals provide a daily reminder of this truth. In a hospital ward, people of many nations, cultures, and beliefs care for one another and receive care from one another. Illness has a way of revealing our shared humanity. We depend on each other. The service given by Windrush families and their descendants within the NHS is part of that story of mutual care and compassion.

Peace-making begins with ordinary acts: listening rather than judging, understanding rather than assuming, forgiving rather than nurturing resentment. It means refusing to allow past hurts to become future divisions. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu often taught, there can be no genuine reconciliation without truth, but neither can there be healing without forgiveness. The Beatitudes point us towards a community shaped by mercy, humility, and peace. On this Windrush Day, we give thanks for those who came, served, and helped build the society and health service we share today. We remember those who suffered injustice, pray for healing where wounds remain, and ask God to help us become peacemakers in our own relationships and communities. In doing so, we bear witness to the One who calls us His children and whose peace reaches beyond all barriers and divisions.

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