

Hello everyone

There are many Bible versions and some people prefer one while others prefer another.

Today I've picked three versions of the same bible verse from John's gospel. Words about Jesus going to prepare a place for us. Which one do you find the most appealing?

And why did I pick them?

Firstly, because Harry Lawnmower, one of the church mowers, has been repaired. Harry Lawnmower developed a hole in its base, but that hole is now whole again due to the work of one of our church members. This person was not a professional metal worker, yet here he was with the right skills at the right time in the right place to repair Harry. It made me think about paths through lives and skills we acquire.

Secondly some one wrote of facebook that it's amazing that there are 10000 varieties of tomatoes. They were responding to my post on Facebook giving 10 facts about tomatoes. So I shared the three important varieties that actually have shaped my life; Ailsa Craig, Eurocross BB and flacca which promoted a another

comment from someone else. I bet he squished them up like we do at school. You bet I did and off I was remembering back to 1984. That is where this morning's picture came from. No doubt you had to look at it a few times to work out what it was and maybe couldn't understand my link to John's gospel. Well that's kind of the point of the reflection.

You see, for several years at Lancaster University, I was looking at how Ailsa Craig, Eurocross and Flacca plants coped with growing in commercial greenhouses containing different atmospheres. On the wall in the manse there is framed picture that contains a table of numbers that clinched me my PhD degree submission in 1984. I pass that picture everyday, but don't often pause now to think about that part of life long gone, but which was so essential in getting me to where I am today. Strange I know. But if I hadn't worked on those plants, I wouldn't have gone to Girvan and received the team working training I got that was so attractive to the church when I applied for ministry training.

Maybe something similar happens when we read the Bible passages regularly. We read them, but don't stop

and take time to remember how important they are to our lives.

Back then I was looking at how plants take in air pollutants from the air. In particular the role that light played in this process. Leaves have holes in them to let water out and air in. There's a picture of one of them on this page today. A stoma we call it or a group of stomata. In normal plants during darkness the holes are closed by guard cells which you can see very clearly in the picture. Water can't get out, but neither can gases get in.

But in the tomato variety flacca, the holes do not close in darkness due to changes in plant hormone levels. So you can separate the effect of light from the usually linked effects of opening and closing stomata. The graph from 1984 shows how darkness and open stomata does not affect water loss from leaves, but does affect the uptake of the gas NO_2 by the leaves. It turns out that light has a role in plants taking NO_2 in. I'm not going to go further into that idea today you'll be happy to know, but if anyone wants to know, send me an e-mail. But being a bit of a narcissist,

I wondered how others had engaged with this experiment from 30 years ago so I looked up how the results had fared over the years and discovered that while it will never rival Darwin or Einstein, there has been a consistent level of engagement with the article over 30 years.. People have reacted differently to this experiment with wilty tomato and have taken the ideas in different directions. And that brought me up short as I was reading some familiar words from a commentary on John's gospel. Different people had read my words from 1984 differently so do I react differently to different ways people write the same lines of John's gospel? Do I find some versions of the bible more helpful than others?

Since I only know one version of the bible that talks of tomatoes and that is a paraphrase where Tomato replaces grain or wheat in 1 Corinthians 15 I gave you three versions of John 14:2 to ponder.

Remember too that all these have been translated from virtually the same set of Greek words.

First from the New international version

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to

prepare a place for you?

then from the King James version

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.

And from the Message version

There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you?

Remember as you ponder them too that John loves to write in riddles. Each word often has several meanings not just the literal meaning.

So do you prefer the directness of the NIV or one of the similar versions who talk of dwelling places.

Maybe you like the contemporary translation of Eugene Peterson who links the various phrases of the original into one flowing sentence in the Message and includes the idea of being on the way?

Then again for you it might be the mind-whirling poetry of the King James version with its idea of a people as a household dwelling together but in many

different mansions which of course sets pictures of big houses in your heads, but remember too the word mansion has associations with temples and suddenly we are with Paul talking of bodies as temples.

All are ways of reading that verse and all tell us something of how Jesus relates to God and to us. We have to sit and work out what John means.

So take these Bible verses and use them as prayer. Read them again and again and again until they sink into your minds and appear in your lives.

Or find a verse that appeals to you from anywhere in the Bible and find it in two or three versions in a digital Bible like Bible Gateway.

Once you have the verses, read them over and over again slowly and then on the following days listen to yourself as you discover which version has filled you full of questions or comfort.

I was surprised which one I turned to first and why?

What about you?

Go on give it a go.

See which verse stays with you.

Wednesday break online 1 July 2020 reflection

Peace be with you,

Amen