

It Snowed on New York

An extraordinary amount of snow fell over a large part of the eastern part of America in a very short space of time. The news on the internet sites I browse came with reports of the crisis, and photographs. But they came with something else too – “In depth reports”. At the push of my fingertip I could look at graphs and statistics of this and other similar snowfalls. At another gentle push I could learn about the tragedy of so many lives lost shovelling snow in sub-zero temperatures. Not only that, but the medical reasons why. And so it went on.

Also in the news recently was the impending financial crisis which may follow China’s faltering economy. With that came a list of avenues to explore – “What you need to know” “How does China’s economy affect you”. I think we are beginning to suffer from information overload.

On top of information overload I think we are in danger of being swamped by a plethora of reports of the latest research telling us why certain types of vegetable are good for preventing cancer, how to reduce allergens and mites in your home furnishings and why looking at a tablet computer just before nodding off is bad for you. Reporting on such research is often sensationalist, contradictory and confusing. Where is truth?

Knowledge is being thrown at us. Isn’t it wonderful to have so much information at our fingertips and available wherever and whenever we want it? Yes, but... only up to a point. I think we are in real danger of losing the joy of discovery.

Go to a wildlife park, a concert or a major sporting event. What do you see? Animals, musicians and sportsmen and women respectively and lots of people staring into their hand-held devices rather than absorbing and enjoying the moment. They maybe researching the lemur they’ve seen for the first time via 4G, they may be recording the music they’ll listen to later or maybe they are looking at the photograph they have just taken of the football star - who they just happen to have missed seeing score an amazing goal. Do you see what I mean?

If you study the teaching of Jesus carefully you will see that he doesn’t relate dozens and dozens of fact or really feed his hearers with lots of information. Jesus doesn’t spell things out, but he does encourage us to discover truth and to grow in our understanding of the kingdom of God. Jesus gives us pointers to discovery - very often in his telling of the parables. Truth isn’t spelt out in black and white; it’s there alright, but we have to find it. Jesus does not implore us to fill our heads with facts and information but he does want us to discover life in all its fullness. A life lived in the knowledge and understanding of the love of God is worth more than we can imagine.

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