

A Parable of the Kingdom

Jim Cummins

Something came through the post which reminded me of a very apt 'kingdom parable'.

It came under the heading 'Training and Development' and included 'Top Ten Personal Safety Hints' which were:

1. Trust your instincts
2. Know your limitations
3. Always report incidents to the police and the Archdeacon, no matter how minor they may seem
4. Keep calm
5. Plan ahead
6. Report to the Archdeacon any area of your work that puts you at risk
7. Know what the rules are, not what you think they are
8. Never be afraid to run away
9. Carry a personal attack alarm in an accessible place at all times
10. No item of property or building is worth your life.

After all that there are the Top ten personal safety tips for Ministers. They are in the same vein and will probably be common sense in many situations or spheres of work. My immediate response, though, was sadness that it was all about our security – all 'Take Care', never 'Take Risks' – and no hint of the value of loving one's neighbour.

So, The Kingdom of Heaven is like a young man (I'll call him Bob) who was making his way on foot towards a railway station in Glasgow to return to London at the end of a walking holiday in the Highlands.

Just now another youth appeared from an alley and demanded his money at knifepoint. Bob took off his rucksack, extracted his wallet and handed it over saying, "O.K. there you are – that's all I've got" and as his mugger wiffled through the notes inside, Bob carried on talking and asked what the money was for and why he needed it. His attacker made it perfectly clear that he had nothing and he had to have money to get what he and his friends needed from their drug supplier. "I see", said Bob, "but now you've got everything and I've got nothing. How am I going to get to London?" The upshot was that the mugger agreed to go halves with him, took out his share of the cash, returned the wallet complete with all credit cards etc., and ran off. Bob caught his train and returned to London (where he is training to become a diplomat!).