

## September 2024: What's your viewpoint?

On one occasion over the summer, as Richard and I were walking in North Yorkshire, we came across a viewing bench occupied by two people. As we walked on we shared with one another our amusement that, with a stunning view of the North York Moors in front of them, both people were looking down, apparently utterly absorbed by their mobile phones.

But as we walked on, I found that image of those two people would not go away, and I found myself reflecting how they were modelling for me something of how I know that I am at times. I am surrounded by the astonishing wonder of God's world, and the astonishing wonder of God's continuing work in his world in so many, many ways, and yet I don't always notice it, because I am not always looking; sometimes I can be looking at – maybe even totally absorbed by – other things.

It has often been said that to live well as a Christian we have to look in several different directions at once. We should be looking upwards, inwards and outwards; upwards to God, inwards to ourselves, and outwards to our neighbours. Looking upwards to God is not upwards in the sense of the unhelpful image of God 'up in the sky,' but upwards in the sense of looking up at someone we respect and admire, and want to become more like. Christians 'look upwards' to God in various ways; by reading the Bible, by prayer, by contemplating God's natural world, by any spiritual activity that helps us focus on what God is like, and how God wants us to live.

Scripture, the Bible, has often been described as like a mirror; if we let it, it will show us ourselves. Looking inwards as a Christian is about allowing our awareness of what God is like and what God values, to act like a mirror for us, showing us what is good and what is bad in ourselves, knowing that God loves us infinitely and wants us to be the very best that we can be. Looking outwards as a Christian is about looking towards the world around us and allowing what we discover, as we look upwards at God, to shape how we respond to all our neighbours, near and far, human and non-human.

Many, if not most of us, live our lives today surrounded by many things that seem to clamour for our attention. My prayer for myself, and for all of us, is that that image of those two people who seemed oblivious to the wonder and beauty in front of them, will remind me not to become so distracted and absorbed by 'stuff', that I lose sight of the wonder and beauty that God shows me every day, if only I am looking at it.

Yours in Christ,  
Louise Petheram  
[rev.louise.p@gmail.com](mailto:rev.louise.p@gmail.com) 01433 621918

If you would like to sign up to receive the regular newsletters from churches and Christian groups across Hope Valley, please go to  
<https://mailchi.mp/f29b1286b3df/2t1gk3uwy2>  
or email me and I can sign you up.