



## The view from heaven

In the current fever of political life, it can feel like a permanent plot: one side's plan is obstructed by another side's plan; whichever side that is not yours is being 'undemocratic'; whichever side you are on, you are being ground down by the forces of Westminster which aren't doing what you want them to be doing. And division is rife.

Here is where I suggest we might need to remember a heavenly perspective and I admit this comes from a position of both belief and inclusivity: that heaven is, ultimately, where God wants everyone to be. Now when I say everyone, I mean everyone. Quite often people in the Church hear 'it's important to be inclusive' and think it just means 'gay people'. But here I mean everyone, yes, even Jacob Rees Mogg, even Jeremy Corbyn, even Etonians, even Donald Trump, even Nigel Farage, even whoever it is you happen to *really* find hard to stomach.

Not that they are right, but God is there for all sinners, and he wants them (and us) to be with him in eternity, because God's just like that. Thinking about heaven in Christian circles is called 'Eschatology': literally translated as "thinking about the end". And this is what the theologian Sam Wells has to say about it.

"Our way to live eschatologically is not to choose whom we think will be joining us in eternity, as if we were predicting a sports team that hadn't yet been selected; it's to learn to live with everybody now, and to receive their unexpected gifts with imagination

and gratitude, in recognition that these are the people with whom we will be spending eternity, lucky and blessed as we all are to be there, and we'd best use these earthly years as a time for getting in the mood."

If you can't go all the way into eternity, try at least imagining what it's going to be like living in this country in twenty years. Pretty much everyone under sixty is still going to be here, and quite a lot of those over sixty too. And they will still be our neighbours. And they will still be convinced that they voted the right way in the Referendum. And France and Ireland will still be the countries nearest to us. And we will still be travelling through Calais to do our trade.

And 'no deal' as a phrase will seem like some weird throw-back because however it all gets done, there will be some kind of treaty/ trade agreement or, if you will, 'deal'. And it will have been obvious that there had to be one.

So it's not that I don't have my own passionate views on the subject and what we should do *right now* because I do, but I also think that we can get a bit caught up in today's tactics, plots, elections or otherwise, when apart from watching *Newsnight* in a more informed manner, most of us can't do much about it. What we really need to make the effort to do is try to appreciate the people we find difficult, arrogant, foolish, or whatever. Because they aren't magically going to change or disappear. They are our neighbours.

Sept 2019 *Thought for the Train* is a short column by the Rev'd Robert Stanier, vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "*Thought for the Train*" at [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).