

The sun was shining, the sky was blue, Covid 19 seemed to be beaten. Things had been going well; a new job which I'm really enjoying. Great people to get to know and join in community with, a lovely new setting to work in and look around, learn about and become familiar with, and a beautiful new home to live in, another lovely new area to explore and discover.

The shifting is underway, and everyone in our household is looking forward to our new adventure. Even the regular bugbears of life were playing their part. The finances were looking ok; Janet and I were getting on well. We had just celebrated a significant anniversary by heading out for dinner. Things in the family were also moving along with everyone making progress at all they were doing, grandchildren abounding, and even one on the way.

So all in all life was looking pretty good.

Then ...

On the Monday morning, just before lockdown, Ruth and I were having a meeting in the church office. The blind over the window was up and I happened to be looking through it when I saw someone come up to the door, which I thought was locked.

So I leapt up and headed for the entry, I wanted to greet our visitor and ask if we could help him. Anyway he got to the door before me, and I realized wasn't locked as he headed straight past me and inside without a word, and then into the toilet.

Now, I know you don't know me very well, but I'm not a particularly gentle individual and I'm not overly impressed by entitlement or a misplaced sense of ownership, so I had to hold myself back slightly.

Anyway I waited ... when our visitor had finished ... out he came ... without flushing.

Now it's one thing to push in and use the facilities, it's quite another to leave those facilities in a worse state than you found them.

So, not being able to restrain myself I said something ...

As I escorted our mohawked visitor off the premises, he had my ears ringing with every clergyman or clergywoman curse known to humankind. He had some real pearls; especially those which might have been intended for members of the Catholic clergy...

As these diamonds of the darkness flowed over me, I thought

I probably could have handled that better....

And I wonder, if this isn't what Peter may have felt, when he said to the Lord Jesus that he shouldn't go to the cross, when Jesus was pouring out his heart to the disciples. Especially after Jesus told him he was Satan, and should get behind him.

I wonder if he might have had a moment's reflection, and thought, "I could have handled that better."

Things were going so well. In the previous verses Jesus had asked the group of them who he was, and Peter was the only one who got the right answer. "You are the Messiah," he says, "the Son of the living God." Talk about hitting the jackpot.

Then in a few moments, he is told he is the work of the devil and should get in behind.

I could have handled that better.

It's something that we all know, that just like Peter and the priest doing the preaching, we have moments when things are going well, it's all working in our favour and we have hit the jackpot. "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God," we cry in our goodness and good feeling. Paul warns us not to think too highly of ourselves.

Then two minutes later, we are told to be quiet and get in behind, because Satan is all over us, and we wonder ... I could have handled that better.

The great thing about the Christian story is that, that is always true. We could have always handled that better. That's something of what this journey is about, that ... God is always with us and God's forgiveness is always given to us, even before we ask,

So let's not be too hard on ourselves, and remember ...

That making mistakes is easy; being forgiven and forgiving ourselves is much harder.

"I could have handled that better" ... is a big part of the journey.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.