Funding the Future

Thanksgiving

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Today is Thanksgiving in the USA, which I, like most people outside that country, understand only slightly.

A festival created largely to mark the reunification of the country after its Civil War in the 1860s, the fact that Thanksgiving survives as a major celebration only a month before Christmas is a testament to the political backing for this holiday, its commercialisation, and the promotion of the importance of family life inside the USA, despite the obvious stresses which clearly exist for a great many.

Leaving all that aside, though, I do think the idea of giving thanks is important.

For those familiar with it, thanksgiving is a part of the normal Christian liturgy used in most churches. No church service is complete without prayers of thanks. I am, however, aware that most people never take part in such events, and I think, partly as a result, the idea of giving thanks gets much less notice now than it once did.

Perhaps as a result, when I asked myself what I should be giving thanks for today, if I were to celebrate Thanksgiving, it took me longer to work that out than I expected, and I still suspect my list is incomplete.

Some things were obvious. I can give thanks for my family, my health, and the fact that, compared to a great many people, I know we live in relative comfort because I am aware that we are likely to be able to pay our bills as they fall due, when I have in my past known the stress and uncertainty of not always being sure how I would do so. I take none of this for granted, and not doing so is, perhaps, one of the key points about Thanksgiving. Giving thanks for what seems ordinary, but is anything but, is just as important as it is for the exceptional.

That is why I also feel grateful to live in a community where I know many people, enjoy their company, and value the exchanges we have.

I am similarly grateful to live surrounded by countryside that gives me open space, isolation, natural beauty, and the wildness that brings me a lot of pleasure.

But the thing I feel the need to give greatest thanks for is the fact that, at the age of 68, I remain curious to find answers to the questions that have driven so much of my life. I know we must create an economy and society where everyone has the opportunity to flourish. This is what I think the economy is for, and the quest for this outcome is motivated by my continual sense of injustice at the deliberate denial of this opportunity to so many because of the greed, insensitivity and prejudice of others with whom they share this planet and so much in common.

There are days when I wonder what life would be like if I woke up in the morning and did not feel the need to write, almost immediately after my eyes are open.

I also ask why I put myself under the pressure of creating videos seven days a week.

And sometimes I wonder how long I can keep doing this. My thanks, then, are for the fact that I do not think, health permitting, that this fire will go out.

I learned about injustice when I was very young. Having a twin brother who realised that he was gay when very young - which I also appreciated and understood just as much as I realised I was straight - created an awareness for me of difference, and of the resulting risks of prejudice and altered life chances he suffered at a time when homosexuality had only just become legal. That exposed me - as a white, male, straight and academically able boy - to the reality of discrimination in a way that might otherwise have been unusual. I have never forgotten the lesson. I have just seen it in a wider context.

I remain close to my twin. We have had very different lives, but we still share our life experiences and have spoken this week, and I am very grateful for that.

What I also know is that without this experience, I might have been a very different person. In a very real sense, I am grateful that I am not. There are moments when fighting injustice feels like hard work. Overall, however, I am grateful for the fire that was planted within me. And whilst injustice remains, I hope it continues to burn for as long as I am around to host it.