

Monday 31st October 2022

We've been south for a few days with Caroline's family celebrating anniversaries. It's allowed time to relax for a brief time and step away from routine. Nevertheless, the news is the gift that keeps on giving, though from a different standpoint you may not use the word 'gift'. So it was that I sat down to watch BBC South with my brother-in-law with the headline 'Southampton born Rishi becomes PM'. Because of the wonders of technology, I was able to see a little from Look North a while later with their headline 'Local Richmond MP Rishi becomes PM'.

Both headlines are true. You'll probably find that elsewhere in the country and indeed the world, Rishi Sunak will have been 'claimed' as being 'one of us'. That's as far as I'm taking this political appointment you'll be pleased to hear.

Later that night, and of much more importance (in my humble opinion), Ipswich Town were playing Port Vale in League 1 in another 'massive' fixture for the Super Blues. I kept up to date on Twitter with the highs and lows of going 2-0 up before being pegged back to 2-2 before finally we got a winner. Onwards to Charlton. The highlight of this game was a young 18-year-old called Cam Humphreys, a product of the Town academy, a local lad and, on his debut, scored the goal of the game, a screamer into the left-hand corner from outside the penalty area. Sweet. Gathered in the away end were nearly 2000 Ipswich fans who started singing 'Cameron Humphreys, he's one of our own'. There's more to it than that but it doesn't translate well to the written page... you get the drift. Not only was it Cam Humphreys that scored, but it was also *our* Cam Humphreys that scored. Born and bred in Ipswich where he grew up as a fan and now playing for the team. In a squad that has bought in some serious talent, when a local lad scores, it is all the better and it makes the fans even prouder. I saw it up here in the Shearer era where the Geordie scorer was adored by fellow Geordie fans. What it means to be 'one of our own'.

I've been reflecting on this recently in a paradoxical way; reminded of how the universally known Jesus of Nazareth was in fact...to put it bluntly...not that well liked in Nazareth. In fact, Jesus was so disliked by people who were once His neighbours that He stated 'no prophet is welcome in his hometown' whilst in His hometown. Awkward. This resulted in a foiled attempt by the locals to throw Him off the nearest cliff. That's taking dislike to extremes.

Why this lack of respect? Well, Jesus said it how it was. Round here they'd say, 'he called a spade a shovel'. Yes, Jesus was compassionate, loving, forgiving and His very presence was about being and saying Good News. But He also raised his voice against injustice and in doing so, spoke truth to power. He railed against those who said 'this is the way we've always done it' when religiosity had patently got in the way of what God wanted for the world He created. History records Jesus as the Saviour of the World. He ushered in an era where we can all call God our Father because of Jesus. But there was a cost. Jesus' crucifixion was the ultimate sacrifice and by that

stage, it wasn't just people local to Nazareth that had a problem with Jesus; the religious establishment turned many of those who saw hope in and through Him to call for His death instead. With His final cry of 'it is finished', many turned away thinking that 'finished' meant 'over' and the chapter and indeed the book of Jesus was consigned to the bin. The truth was it was just the beginning. Dishonoured He may have been in His hometown, but He remained true to His Father's purpose to break through the glass ceiling of religion to usher in amazing grace. I for one am pleased to hold a flag that bears His name and happy to claim 'follower' status to the One rejected by 'His own' but now honoured the world over.