

## Thought For the Day 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Good Morning

Even though the leaders of China and Russia failed to take their seats at the G20 this weekend the Summit has made history – it's the first time India has hosted it and never before has it been held in South Asia.

It marks the shifting of the international centre of gravity and the might of the Asian economies. It's also recognised at last the economic potential of Africa.

Our Prime Minister went to India on Friday and the Chancellor arrived yesterday.

There's also been comment that the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and of India are both practising Hindus.

I've visited India several times, to Northern Bihar which is vulnerable to devastating floods and to West Bengal that'd been hit by catastrophic cyclones - disasters with the same trauma as the tragedy unfolding in Morocco.

But the images of poverty and suffering indelibly printed on my memory are now challenged by those of India's superiority in the Space Race.

It was on the road to West Bengal that my eyes were opened by a Hindu community worker, who spends his life with the poor and with the landless. His name - Ardhendu Chatterjee. On the no-man's land between the road and the farms he gives the landless seeds and teaches them how to cultivate a quick growing crop that would feed an animal and give them firewood to keep them warm on cold nights.

As I walked behind him and his gang of landless men, all hanging on his every word, the picture that leapt into my mind was of Jesus telling his own followers the Parable of the Sower. How just like the landless, this Sower cast his seed on the ground, some on the path, some on rocks, and every now and again some fell on good soil and yielded a surprisingly great crop.

I shall never forget how this Hindu teacher unwittingly gave me a vision of Jesus.

When I left India Ardhendu gave me a book of poetry by Rabindranath Tagore. One of the poems is a prayer that God would 'strike at the root of penury in my heart' and went on to beg 'give me strength never to disown the poor (nor to) to bend my knees before insolent might'.

In all the deals done around the table of the G20, history would certainly be made if such a vision seized the minds of such economic might.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE

(There is more about this in "Justice for Christ's Sake" published last year by SPCK.)