

In an English lesson at school we looked at a poem called 'Going Downhill on a Bicycle' (which has the rather un-PC subtitle 'A Boy's Song'). Written, according to my teacher, during WW1, it describes exactly what the title suggests - the exhilaration of whizzing downhill on a bicycle. One of its verses goes thus:

Is this, is this your joy?
O bird, then I though a boy,
For a golden moment share
Your feathery life in air!

Pretty words, but I'm talking here about an English class in the 1970s, and it was being given by a student teacher who, I suppose, would have been in his early twenties – an age and perhaps a decade when in some circles it was considered trendy to be cynical. This teacher's take on the poem was that it was ridiculous to be writing such whimsy when battles were being fought, and losses and suffering were happening to families and communities everywhere. The child in the class who was brave enough to say of the poem, 'Well, I rather like it,' was given a disapproving frown.

Researching this poem very recently I discover that it was written by an Anglican clergyman. The reason I was researching it was because I was wondering what on earth to write about whilst the future of our country is so uncertain; what I write today in January in front of one political backdrop is likely to be read in February front of a completely different one. We don't know what our future holds from one day to the next.

So I thought perhaps we do need to hear about what's constant and reliable: the physical thrill of speeding downhill on two wheels will never change; neither will the comfort of a roaring fire, the reassurance of plants showing green through the soil or the sound of a loved one's voice. And most constant of all things is the knowledge that God's love flows ceaselessly through our world like a mighty river, regardless of the messy obstacles that we human beings create and throw in its path.

We are living through alarming times, but holding on to all that's constant and unchanging can help; trusting in God can give us confidence in the future.

Right, I'm going to get my bike out now!