WE LIVE IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

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The certainties of our age; scientific advance, social change, economic growth and freedom from poverty, war and disease are built on sand.
Category: Observations

I don't know how many times I've heard people on the media and in other contexts say that we are living in unprecedented or strange times. And you know what? They are right, but generally not for the right reason.

The world that we live in today, especially those of us in the west, is different from anything that any of our ancestors have ever seen.

Think about the pace of technological development. We may not have the jet packs and hoverboards that we hoped that the twenty-first century would bring, but most of us carry a video-phone around in our pocket these days. The technology is so common, we just call them phones. Across the board, in all sorts of areas, technology is moving so quickly that it is difficult to keep up.

Socially, we are living in an era of massive change, too. Issues of sexuality and identity which were not even on the public radar ten or fifteen years ago are now broadly accepted as issues of certainty and dogma. The pace of change is breathtaking.

We are also in an unprecedented age of government. Many governments in the world today run their countries with a view to what is best for the people of their country, not simply in order to acquire wealth and power themselves. You might question their competence - and that is entirely valid. However, most democratic governments aim to serve their people. We have become so used to this idea that we no longer consider how strange it is. For most of history (and in many places today) rulers have seen the common people as tools to be used and discarded in a quest to advance their own interests. The sort of governments many of us live under today are historical anomalies.

What isn't new is a pandemic! Pandemics have been a part of the human experience since time immemorial and they will keep on occurring as long as we live on this planet.

What is new are the advances in travel and communication which allowed the pandemic to sweep across the globe in weeks or months rather than in years. We also have unprecedented scientific and analytical tools to throw at this disease which hold up hopes of vaccination or treatments being developed in rapid time. Pandemics aren't new, but our ability to respond to them has changed out of all recognition in my lifetime.

That being said, the pandemic has also shown that this unprecedented modern world that we have

built for ourselves is constructed on flimsy foundations. The economies which underpin rapid scientific and social advance are being strained almost to breaking point. It is far from certain that we can maintain our current trajectory. Equally, we have seen governments in a number of places prioritise their own political capital over the needs of people faced by this disease.

In reality, the pandemic has done nothing more than speed up trends which were already apparent. The certainties of our age; scientific advance, social change, economic growth and freedom from poverty, war and disease are built on sand. They certainly make life comfortable for those who benefit from them, but these unprecedented times will not last forever.

> *â€œAnyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. [25] Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it wonâ€™t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesnâ€™t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.â€*
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> *Jesus of Nazareth*