

# A TALE OF TWO TOWERS

## “Suppose one of you wants to



**build a tower.”**

Luke 14:28

November 2022

In the gospel of Luke we find a short mini parable about a man who started to build a tower but failed to complete the task. This tower was probably a vineyard tower. Vineyards were often equipped with towers from which watch was kept against thieves who might steal the harvest. An unfinished building is always a humiliating thing.

A few years ago while listening to Radio 4's 'Today' programme up popped **'Thought for the Day'**. I know I am not the only one who looks out for Rhidian Brook's contribution to the Thought for the Day. Rhidian is a writer who's 'Thought for the Day' contributions are always profound, entertaining, wise and funny. His faith is confident and always present, but he never forces it on us. On the 6th July 2017 Rhidian recorded this Thought for the Day entitled **' A Tale of Two Towers'**, Which I reproduce below:

**"On a clear day I can see some of London's landmarks from the top of the house. The arches of Wembley Stadium to the north. The BT Tower in the centre and, dominating the eastern skyline, the Shard, which is five years old this week. Sadly, London has another landmark now, one that draws the eye and stops the heart. The burned-out shell of Grenfell Tower - a building**

**clad in sackcloth and ashes, standing in admonishment to other grander buildings. What used to be a panoramic view is now a sort of morality tale. A Tale of Two Towers.**

**Grenfell and the Shard are not that far apart, a few miles as the helicopter flies, but they represent polarized experiences of life in this city. For some, one is now a tragic symbol of neglect, incompetence and under-investment; the other a shiny, hubristic symbol of excess. Yet despite inhabiting different universes, these two towers share the same ground. Their fates are connected and you don't need to be a poet or a preacher to see the connections.**

**As the displaced people of Grenfell wait for new, permanent accommodation from which to rebuild their lives; news comes that the ten penthouses at the top of the Shard (with a reported collective**

**value of £200 million) apparently remain unsold, according to the buildings management company. Shocking though this sounds, the Shard is not an anomaly. London is full of empty luxury flats in shiny glass towers that people cannot afford.; investments for some, but homes to few.**

**Whenever there is a tragedy involving human error, it is usual for someone to say that, 'lessons must be learned.' What can we learn from this? Learning lessons has to be about more than receiving information or facts; it requires some genuine change of mind, heart and then action. Of course, the Grenfell fire is more than a lesson to be learned, it's a lived disaster that awaits a deeper explanation. The Shard's difficulties are more than just symbolic of excessive wealth, but there is a line that connects these two towers.**

**In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells a mini parable, short enough to quote here in full, that offers some insight into what that connection might be:**

*'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This person began to build and was not able to finish."*'

**If I could extract from this short tale a lesson that speaks to these situations, one that might change things, it would be, 'Lets stop building towers that are too expensive to buy, or too dangerous to live in, and instead estimate the true value of building homes in which people can live.'**

Rhidian Brook: Radio 4 Thought for the Day: 6.7.2017.

