

I've been through Robin Hood territory a couple of times recently. Yesterday I was in Nottingham, and I recently passed through where Robin is reputed to have been born, in the village of Loxley, which is now rather overtaken by its neighbouring village of Sheffield; and Hathersage where Little John is supposedly buried. I will spare you my rendition of any of the Robin Hood songs, especially at this time in the morning!

But most of us know some of the tales of Robin Hood, and his band of men, stealing from the rich to give to the poor; righting wrongs, battling on behalf of the oppressed, fighting for justice. (I am pleased to observe that this group included a cleric; though Friar Tuck does not always personify priests in their best light!)

Of course, both Robin Hood, and his band of followers were no favourites with the authorities. Being pursued by the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Guy of Gisborne, and bunches of soldiers is the stuff of so many action adventure books or films. A hero.

Another hero, with a band of followers; pursued by the authorities, on the side of the little people, recognising and supplying the needs of the poor, was of course Jesus. So no wonder there are so many stories of him too, not just in the written Biblical record, but in songs and mystery plays; in paintings and in films - throughout the world, and throughout history.

The authorities thought they had him, bound, nailed, crucified - dead. But more dramatically than any fictional action hero, with a single bound he is free: risen, his foes vanquished!

No wonder so many of the tales of Robin Hood are so appealing - and interesting to see their precursor, in a way, in the radical Jesus of the gospels.

*Robin Hood, Robin Hood, Riding through the glen,
(Robin Hood, Robin Hood, With his band of men,
Feared by the bad, loved by the good,
Robin Hood! (Robin Hood! Robin Hood!)*

Drat - I promised not to sing...