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To flea, or not to flea

It is a fact that, if placed in a jar with a lid on it, a flea will continue to jump, constantly banging against the lid. However, after a few days, the flea learns that there is a lid and will jump just short of the height of the jar. Even if the lid is then removed, the flea continues to jump just short of the non-existent lid. It has been shown that the offspring of these fleas will also jump no higher than the imaginary lid.

I find this an enormously powerful and challenging image which could be applied to so many aspects of human life. Many of us have had our stories shaped by forces – some of them outside of our control – which means we reach less than our potential. In time, the new, lower expectation becomes the norm, even when the original barrier has been removed. Such constraints can be seen both in individuals and in groups or organisations. Over time we may have created narratives for ourselves that justify our low expectations; stories we may even have passed on to future generations.

I have chosen to align myself with the story that says that at the heart of the universe is a God of love: a God who is on the side of all those who are oppressed and forgotten, who feel insignificant and powerless and who calls all of us to join in the revolutionary movement to bring hope and real liberation to all. This is the story of Jesus's life and example. He doesn't just take off the lid, he wants to smash the jar too!

I will leave it with you to ask what your own jar is, what lid – or lids – have made you less than you can be and, most importantly, what jumping out of the jar might look like.

