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A Presentable Life

It is strange to think of the importance of social media, given its recent invention. The internet only became accessible in my late teens, so computers were mostly for playing and typing while I was growing up. Facebook was invented when I was a young adult and it is amazing to remember how quickly this new tool was taken up by my peers. For my wife and I, who had recently moved away from our university town and had our first child, this provided a useful way to stay in touch with friends.

Working with young people, it is interesting to see how ‘internet natives’ (those who have grown up in a world where the internet is accessible) use social media. On one hand there is an expectation that one must be seen to be interacting with the online community. On the other hand, social media has become a source of hard work and anxiety for many young people. The effort involved in sustaining the right image is enormous. It’s as if every young person must have a brand strategy – hiding their less savoury characteristics, accentuating the positives.

I’m interested in this at this time of year because Jesus’ public image is so important in the Easter story. Having travelled through a small country as a teacher and healer, Jesus had developed a following. On arrival in Jerusalem, he is welcomed by the people with eager expectation on Palm Sunday. But as passion week went on, Jesus’ flagrant lack of positivity seems to goad the people. His honesty on full display – he preaches against the established system and drives out unjust markets from the temple – the people become disenchanted, eventually calling for his death.

The gospels show truth and honesty were dangerous for Jesus. The challenge to follow him is not meant to be comfortable or presentable.