

Lent Reflection Week 5 – 17th March 2021

Pilgrimage

Prepared by Rob

One definition of a pilgrimage is as follows:

Any long journey, especially one undertaken as a quest or for a votive purpose, as to pay homage.

I recently watched the film *The Way*.

An American father travels to France to retrieve the body of his estranged son, who died while attempting the pilgrimage to Spain's Santiago de Compostela. He resolves to take the journey himself, in an effort to understand both himself and his son. On the way he meets three companions, a Dutchman, a Canadian woman and an Irish travel writer. They all have different reasons for joining the pilgrimage and to start with they don't get on very well with each other. The American especially does his best to lose the rest of them. But as they progress along the way each of them is changed. By the time they arrive at their destination they share a warm friendship.

Is this the purpose of the journeys we make that we are changed in some way?

The bible is full of journeys:

Abraham travelled from Ur to the land of Canaan.

The Israelites travelled for 40 years from Egypt to the promised land.

Jesus and his disciples travelled from the lakeside and their fishing boats to the maelstrom of Jerusalem at Passover.

I am sure you can think of lots more.

Overarching all this there is that cosmic journey from the spirit hovering over the waters in darkness in Genesis to the brilliant light of the New Jerusalem in Revelation.

Lent too is a journey or pilgrimage. There is only one more week to come. How is it going for you? Have you found new insights, been challenged to see things differently, decided that there are changes that need to be made?

The last year of pandemic has been a journey - frightening, frustrating, painful, confusing, challenging. All of our lives have been changed and we have not yet reached our destination. At least we travel together, and there is hope and encouragement in that. Sydney Carter's song speaks for us.

Rejoice & Sing 549

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:

*And it's from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn.

all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go,
you'll be telling me the way, I know.

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving when the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)
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1 Kings 19: 4-9

But he himself [Elijah] went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Revelation 22: 1-7

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

A Prayer

Lord thank you that you do not leave us to journey on our own. You have promised to be with us always, and you provide companions for us along the way. When our strength fails like Elijah revive us, restore us in body mind and spirit to continue the journey,

We pray for those who feel abandoned, isolated or who grieve because illness has taken from them family members or friends. Lord comfort them and help those around them to be faithful companions. Be with and sustain all who care, whether in the caring professions or as volunteers. We ask for healing for those who have survived Covid-19 but are laid low with Long Covid.

We pray for students and children whose education has been disrupted and who worry about how this might affect their hopes for the future, and for parents & grandparents who are exhausted by

the challenge of home learning. As schools re-open we hold before you teachers, support staff and all who work in our schools and universities as they start to tackle the task of restoring the well-being and learning of their pupils.

As we read from Revelation that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations we pray that the nations of the world will work together to bring vaccines to all. That the usual barriers of distrust and war, poverty, fear and self-interest will fall away. Together may we understand that every life matters to you and must also matter to us.

Help us to use to the full the limited opportunities that we have just now to draw alongside people, and empower us as restrictions are relaxed to serve as your body on earth and to show your love in the community around us.

Amen

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