

REFLECTION 'FAITH ON THE ROAD'

Faith is less a perfect map for life than a commitment to walking faithfully. The scriptures don't so much offer certainty as the default; however what we learn and can acknowledge from the scriptures is that we can faithfully put our trust in our Creator God, Jesus God's only Son, and the Holy Spirit even in the dark, they are the grounding of being. Abram steps out with only a promise. Psalm 121 opens with looking to the hills, not because the path is certain, but because the helper comes from beyond the hills. Paul reframes achievement as mercy received, a stance of dependence rather than prize. Nicodemus, drawn to truth yet wary of open explanation, learns that rebirth begins with openness to the strange daylight of God's Spirit shining through the darkness. Lent names the space between loss and resurrection, a transitional road where what we lose may be a measurement of what we gain: vision, compassion, mercy, new sight.

During this time of Lent when we often put something aside as our sacrifice I wonder what might God be calling us to put aside or perhaps leave behind during in this moment of our faith journey?

We could leave behind our *illusion of control*. If faith is walking into an unseen future, then the impulse to command outcomes—our plans, our timings, our tidy boxes for how God must work—must be let loose. Abram's departure is a migration, not a guarantee. The psalmist's hope isn't on a map that never falters but in a God who meets us as we go up the mountain, and through the valleys alike.

Letting go of the need to *dominate outcomes* frees the need from being the master of all things, inviting us to instead adopt an attitude of deeper listening. Without rushing to answers, we use the fruit of patience, allowing what disturbs us to become invitational rather than being seen or felt as a threat. In that moment mercy reveals itself in what the world labels inconvenient or out of step with everything else that's happening. By accepting God's mystery, we enable ourselves to recognise grace is at work in the small moments, and to trust that unseen beginnings may hold the key to transformations.

Leaving behind the crutch of *certainty* as a virtue. As avid readers of the scriptures over our lifetime alone we have learned from Abraham to Paul to Nicodemus, to St Francis of Assisi, to John Wesley, to Martin Luther King, to John Stott, to Bonhoeffer to N T Wright, our Christian way of life is about trust in God's mercy when clarity is needed. In a time when certainty is often celebrated and doubt stigmatised, leaving behind a false virtue of sureness makes space for honesty to exist as we come before God: lament when grief is heavy, curiosity when answers seem rather thin and wispy, and gratitude when grace glistens in subtle signs. The journey through Lent is precisely that: learning to live in the tension of mystery while remaining strong in God's faithfulness.

Leaving behind the idols of *comfort and complacency* isn't an easy task. Lent is the road between loss and resurrection; it invites us to give up the security of familiar rituals, predictable outcomes, and self-protective self-management. To follow Jesus into the cross-shaped path is to encounter the ways we have clothed ourselves in ease – our routines, our preferences, our self-justifications. Leaving these behind isn't emptying ourselves to perish but making room for grace to enter and rearranging our loves so that mercy, justice, and hospitality become our guiding compass.

I wonder if it's possible for us to leave behind the false divide between *private faith and public witness*? The faith that walks with God in Lent isn't a temporary one lasting only 40 days but one which bears fruit in love for the neighbour for all time. The God who invites rebirth in Nicodemus is the same God who is still offering the invitation for us to see again- not just with private spiritual blessedness, but with the bold, costly mercy that seeks out the neighbour in need, the outcast in welcoming hospitality, and courageous discipleship. Leaving behind privatized faith means letting God's mercy spill into neighbourhoods, workplaces, congregations, and the margins where grace is most often needed in the dead of night and the brightness of day.

We all tend to carry our doubts, griefs, and half-healed hopes, however, God invites us to carry much more than that. God also invites us to be the

bearers of blessing, to be the haulers of good news for others who are walking on the same road as you - in other words, take the message of Christ's Good News with you wherever you go, in word, action and spirit. The stars may be the only map at times, but the map isn't the final word – the One who leads us through the night has the final word. Leaving behind the mindset of scarcity thinking there is only so much mercy and grace to go around or thinking you're not worthy – *opens room for God's abundant mercy and grace to be known and shared.*

In this light, what is God calling us individually and as a community of faith toward? A reshaping of trust into a habit of mercy; a reordering of love toward the neighbour; a willingness to walk contemplatively with questions, even as we cling to the promise that Christ who began a good work will bring it to completion. If faith is walking on with the stars and moon at night as our map, then leaving behind what dulls our sight-anxiety about outcomes, fear of losing control, cynicism about the possibility of transformation – becomes the first step towards a more spacious faith.

Lent becomes not only a plea for rescue but an apprenticeship in seeing—seeing that the Christ who broke the bread and took hold of the cup, dying on a cross only to rise again after three days *is* the true bright light by which we live and move and have our being. The 'map' that Christ has given us is akin to faith on the road well-traveled by Christ himself.

Amen