



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

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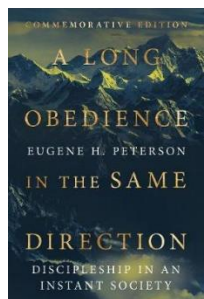
Dear Friends,

When I was at what was then called junior high school, I used to enjoy being a part of the annual school play. I was never the star, and my talent for acting was as limited then as it is now, but I did enjoy being part of the cast and working with others during the rehearsals and then in the performances.

What attracted me to get involved each year was the notice that the teacher in charge of the school play would put on the noticeboard when they were looking to recruit people to be involved in the play that year.



The first quality on the list was not 'great acting skills' or 'a beautiful singing voice' but was simply the word 'Stickability'. The teacher wasn't looking for those who might turn up to a few rehearsals and then drop out – but was instead interested in those who would be committed cast members right through to the final performance.



Stickability is an important quality for the follower of Jesus. Eugene Peterson, who produced 'The Message' version of the Bible, wrote a classic book about discipleship which was called 'A long obedience in the same direction'. This book was written

over 40 years ago now, but in a world in which we too easily focus on the immediate and the transient, Peterson's challenge to long term committed discipleship has a powerful message for us still.

This important message is seen in a series of brief conversations recorded towards the end of Chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel. In each of those three short conversations, Jesus speaks of the cost of becoming a disciple.

Jesus ends those conversations by saying, 'No-one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.' (Luke 9 v 62).

These are challenging words – but they are realistic words. To follow Jesus is to know His accepting love and His transforming grace – but discipleship has a cost as well.

As we continue to seek to be faithful through the challenging lockdown days, we can hear Jesus' words speaking into our lives.

Jesus invites us to a journey of discipleship which will involve 'a long obedience in the same direction'. Just like my schoolteacher all those years ago, Jesus is looking for disciples with 'Stickability'.

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake

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Worship Reflection

I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name for ever. (Psalm 86 v 12)

Hymn (StF 137)

New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising
prove;
through sleep and darkness
safely brought,
restored to life, and power, and thought



Prayer

Sovereign Lord open our lives to your living presence, so we may glimpse your glory and discover you with us in every moment. Amen.

Bible Reading (Matthew 10 v 26-31)

So, do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So, don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Reflection

Jesus' words to his disciples are preparing them for a time of persecution and difficulty ahead. There will come a time when they will face physical danger but, if they trust in God, their eternal souls will be kept safe.

In the six verses in this week's reading, Jesus tells his disciples three times not to be afraid. They can trust in God because they are never outside of God's care and concern.



To make this point, Jesus uses two simple but powerful illustrations. Firstly, says Jesus, God is aware of what happens even to the smallest birds that are 'two a penny' in the market and, perhaps even more amazingly, God knows how many hairs we have on our heads.

At the end of verse 29, the Greek phrase says literally 'without your Father'. To make the English version read more easily, translators add various additional words to explain this phrase. So, in this version we find 'outside your Father's care' while other translations speak of 'without your Father's knowledge'. Each of these additional words gives a slightly different interpretation to Jesus' words, but the core meaning is the same. When we face persecution or other painful experiences in life, Jesus says to us "Do not be afraid". God knows us personally and God will be with us through whatever challenges we face.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray especially this week for -

- Wisdom for our political leaders
- Those who can now meet another family member but have to choose who that will be
- Those who work on the 'front line' that they might know that they are not forgotten
- Those who have lost their jobs or whose future employment is uncertain.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 492)

Christ be my leader by night as by day;
Safe through the darkness for he is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future his care,
Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

Final Prayer May the grace of God always surround us, enriching our lives, seasoning our words and shaping our actions, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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The Methodist Church is encouraging us all to 'tell our stories'. You are invited to choose a Bible or hymn or song verse, or perhaps a prayer that you have read or written, and to describe why what you have chosen is particularly important to you. Contributions need to be no longer than 250 words.



This week's contribution is from Martin Squires a Local Preacher from Aldershot.

For weeks ad nauseam it's been 'coronavirus', 'unprecedented', and 'lock-down. Yet there is light and hope amidst it all – as conveyed by the pictures of rainbows in many a window.

Some folk displaying a rainbow will know that, in the ark, Noah and his family survived the great flood that destroyed the rest of humanity as recorded in the Bible's first book.

After the flood God vowed that never again would everything be destroyed by inundation. Then God declared, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." (Genesis 9 v 13). In verse 16 God adds that whenever the rainbow appears, He will see it and will remember the covenant. Equally, this visible sign of the covenant will serve to remind everyone else.

Less well known is that, in roughly the middle of the Bible (page-wise), as his prophecy begins, Ezekiel recounts his 'Visions of God' which includes 'Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around Him' (Ezekiel 1 v 28). Also, in the last book, Revelation, John writes, 'A rainbow, that shone like an emerald encircles the throne' of the one sitting on it (Revelation 4 v 3).

When I see a rainbow, I want to be where it seems to be! But that's not possible as it 'moves' or disappears. However, these Biblical rainbows aren't ephemeral. Rather they remind me that, through divine grace, I'll one day reach that third rainbow. Thanks be to God!

