

I was with someone the other day who said “Every day I get up and I tell myself I’m going to think of five things to be thankful for and then I say, no, I’m going to think of ten”.

Like many of us, this is someone who has experienced her share of the real ups and downs of life, including being twice divorced and now her youngest of three married sons is separating from his wife after five years of marriage, in spite of counselling and mediation. Very sadly, the relationship just hasn’t worked out.

Last Sunday in her Reflection and Prayers, Elaine was reminding us of ‘lament’ in the psalms. Psalm 31 is an example of this. It starts with real anxiety for deliverance, to be freed from the trap. King David, to whom the psalm writing is credited, is in fear for his life. He expresses feelings of distress, anguish, weakness, being alone and ostracised. There is real honest openness concerning the huge difficulties David is facing, on every human level. And then, in verse 14, there is a change as he writes:

“But I trust in you O Lord; I say You are my God. My times are in your hands”. Here’s hope.

Verse 19: “How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you”. Here’s belief.

Verse 20: “In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men. In your dwelling you keep them safe”. Here’s trust.

Verse 21: “Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city”. Here’s remembering God’s goodness.

Verse 23: “Love the Lord, all his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full”. Here’s David’s faith being proclaimed to encourage others to put hope in and find strength in God.

On 31st August, we commemorated Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne. Aidan was a humble man. He was greatly loved and respected because of his love and compassion for the poor, his kindness toward people, and his distaste for pomp and excessiveness. He exuded genuine warmth, humility, and a deep love of goodness — a man anyone would love to call “friend”.

Aidan of Lindisfarne was born in Ireland. It is believed he studied under St. Senan before becoming a monk at Iona, the monastery St. Columba had established. At the request of King Oswald of Northumbria, Aidan became the first bishop of Lindisfarne, a small island off the coast of Northern England, in 635. He was well-known throughout the kingdom for his knowledge of the Bible and his great learnedness and eloquence as a preacher. He was known to be holy, and miracles were attributed to him.

He founded and became abbot of the monastery at Lindisfarne, which became known as the English Iona. Created by its monks was the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of the most beautiful works of art from the medieval period. It was a centre of learning and a great storehouse of European literature during the Middle Ages, as well as a centre of missionary activity for all of northern England. He died in 651 at the royal castle at Bamburgh and his feast day is 31st August.

Several years in succession we stayed on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. It started as a time of Retreat, but then more each year of our family joined us. We experienced some wonderful times, not realising how much would change for us as a family and take us through the unexplained fatal illness of one of our party, who was so fit and well. Yet, there is so much to remember in thankfulness. I too am reminded to think of five, ten or more things every day, for which to give thanks. Even the hard times can be lived in and through in faith and be looked back on with

renewed fortitude....The last line of the psalm reads: “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”

Prayer

O loving God,
who called your servant Aidan
from the peace of a cloister
to re-establish the Christian mission
in northern England,
and gave him the gifts of gentleness,
simplicity, and strength:
Grant that we, following his example,
may use what you have given us
for the relief of human need,
and may persevere in commending the saving Gospel
of our Redeemer Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

From Johnnette Benkovic’s *Graceful Living: Meditations to Help You Grow Closer to God Day by Day*

Pictures of St Aidan and Lindisfarne

