

Reflection for 25th July

The Lord will Provide (Genesis 22 v. 14)

There is a much loved hymn I have known for over 75 years but the words I learnt in childhood were changed in Ancient and Modern Revised and later books. The old words I could sing with conviction:

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wonderfully reigneth,
Shelters thee under his wings, yea, so gently sustaineth:

Hast thou not seen

All that is needful hath been

Granted in what he ordaineth?"

J. Neander 1650-1680

The line in italics, the line in the older versions of Ancient and Modern and English Hymnal, we can sing with conviction. But sadly, the later books changed the translation of the line in italics to "How thy heart's wishes have been" and that always reminds me of the story of the small girl with brown eyes who wanted blue eyes like her best friend. She prayed for blue eyes, but when she looked in the mirror next morning her eyes were still brown. She told her mother that the people who told her God answers prayer were wrong. She asked Him for blue eyes like her friends but they were still brown. Her mother said gently "But darling, isn't 'No' an answer?"

As we come slowly out of lockdown many of us may well find our hearts wishes are not what emerges as the new normal. But as we move forward in faith we can be sure that God will provide all that is needful.

Here is a somewhat amusing illustration, on a very everyday level. This spring I planted tomato seeds in my propagator. Alicante, Yellow Delight, San Marzano and one other. Another favourite hymn has the lines "Vainly we wait for the harvest time till God gives life to the seed". The Alicante germinated well and five plants are flourishing in the greenhouse. Only two San Marzano germinated and they are flourishing in pots on the patio. But I managed to accidentally kill the only Yellow Delight to sprout.

Now I set those seeds before lockdown when I expected to be selling surplus crops at the Country Market and for church funds. Those outlets are denied me at the moment. But my family and I really enjoy the little yellow delight tomatoes. The Lord will provide sometimes methinks with a wry sense of humour. While weeding the cracks between the path slabs I pulled up three tomato plants. They are now flourishing in pots on the patio. But what are they? There are clearly two different kinds, but only the harvest time will show what God has provided. I smile every time I water them. Then last week I found a clump of tomato plants growing in the middle of the closed compost heap. I pulled them up as I had already set a courgette plant there and they were crowding it. Three were strong looking plants and they are now set in a trough like a grow bag on the patio and two smaller ones in rings in the greenhouse. I didn't get "my hearts wishes", the plants I sowed, but I certainly have "all that is needful" and it looks as though I will have plenty to give away later in the year.

If we are going to trust God in the big things in life we need to start small like the seeds and recognise his hand in the little everyday things. That is often easier for gardeners because our crops and flowers depend on things we cannot control: germination of seeds, weather, control of pests,

pollination by insects ... so much in our everyday lives is part of what The Lord Will Provide. So let us all go forward in faith with a smile on our lips and expectation of happy surprises in our hearts.

As the first world war song my uncle used to sing puts it “What’s the use of worrying? It never was worth while. So, pack up your troubles in the old kit bag and smile boys, that’s the style.”

Today is the feast of St. James the Apostle. Look at John 21, v. 1-14. James and John along with Peter and Andrew and some other disciples had been out all night fishing in the normal way, casting their nets on the left side of their boat – and they had not caught a single fish. They see someone on the shore who calls out to them to cast their net on the right side, the wrong side, of the boat to get a catch. Crazy they think, but they do it any way and are amazed by the size o the catch; so large they actually count the number of fish in the net. Then they know the figure on the shore is their risen Lord who has provided yet again.

