

12th August 2020

Amazing

"Non equidem invideo, mirror magis.

"Indeed, I am not envious, rather I am amazed!"

Virgil, Eclogues No. 1

My first role as a minister was in Easterhouse in Glasgow. A post-war housing scheme, Easterhouse had a notorious reputation, but the Christian community was always a beacon of light. The church had been built in the 1950s, and in 1973 had a leaking roof. The increasing number of leaks had become too much for temporary repairs, and we'd run out of buckets to catch the drips. So, a decision was made to replace the roof.

I was with the architect and builder in the church for the final new-roof inspection, when the builder turned to me and said, "What we need, minister, is a heavy downpour of rain to test the roof." To which I replied, "OK guys. Just give me a minute till I have a word with the Big Man upstairs and I'll see what I can do." I went through the foyer and stepped outside ... and the heavens opened with a *massive* thunderstorm. Turning on my heel I went back inside and shouted down the aisle, "OK chaps? Will that do?" leaving an architect and builder open-mouthed. Amazing!

A bit of fun, of course, and maybe they were envious of my direct line to the Almighty. But it certainly looked as though, if they'd known Virgil, they would have said, "Rather, I am amazed!"

John Newton wrote *Amazing Grace* in 1772. In an American *Shapenote* version, to the tune *Jewett*, there is the addition of this chorus:

Shout, shout for glory, shout, shout aloud for glory.

Brother, sister, mourner, all shout glory hallelujah.

In our present circumstances, when old things are being replaced by new ways of working which have to be tested against the storms of life, let's spend more time being amazed rather than being fearful, shouting aloud for glory rather than being apprehensive. There are still plenty of examples of "amazing grace" which call for hallelujahs from us all.

A prayer for today

"The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures ..."

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound ..."

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