

10th July 2021

Admiration

“Season your admiration for a while.”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

There are times when you hear about something so remarkable that you can do no more than react with admiration and wonder.

I was discussing with a good friend influences on our faith, especially from our early years. He recounted the story of his grandmother, a woman who'd died before he was born but who figured often in family stories. She lived in a Gaelic-speaking community in the northwest of Scotland and was a regular church-attender, as most people were in her locality. At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the young men of the village went off to fight, and these included her eldest son.

One day a telegram from the War Office was delivered, the dreaded message that her beloved son was “missing, believed killed in action”. Clutching the telegram, she went to the door of the croft and, in the face of a howling gale, shouted the remarkable affirmation of Job, from the Authorised Version of Scripture with which she was more than familiar:

*Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:
but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*

My friend ended his story by saying: “I am in awe of that. And why would I not be, in the light of such faith and trust?”

Why would I not be? would be my response too, for I can't retell his story, or even write it here, without the hairs on my neck standing up or my eyes filling with tears. Are my faith and my trust as awesome as that? I think not. I would *like* them to be. But I don't know how I'd have reacted to such awful news. In the face of the howling gales of tragedy in life I'm not sure I'd be able to do what that wonderful woman did. But can I take an example from her? Can I be influenced – as my Christian friend clearly was – by who she was and what she stood for? Oh yes, I can indeed.

When there's that kind of influence to draw upon, do I not have a little more purpose to “maintain mine own ways” in faith and trust? I hope so. For there's no need to season our admiration for someone like that.

A prayer for today

When my faith's not good enough, I lean on the example of faith from others. Amen

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