

6<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## Achievement

**“Some achieve greatness ...”**

*William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night*

The Isle of Mann cyclist, Mark Cavendish, won his 34<sup>th</sup> *Tour de France* stage on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021, equalling the stage wins of arguably the greatest cyclist of all time, Eddie Merckx. Cavendish will have to wait till next year's *Tour* to see if he can overtake Merckx, but his achievement to date is quite remarkable. He was asked by a TV reporter for his reaction to his latest stage win. He thought for a bit before replying with deep emotion, “Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do stuff. Men, women, old, young, it doesn't matter. You can do stuff! Don't let anyone tell you different.”

He talked about setting goals, believing in yourself, coming back from disappointments. All his words were inspirational. But it was his opening line that left me with tears of admiration:

***“Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do stuff.”***

Print that off in big letters. Write in in your diary. Post it on *Facebook*. Put it in a letter to a friend. Tell it to your grandchildren. Pin it on your noticeboard. Make it the motto of your Youth Club or sports team. Preach about it on Sunday. “Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do stuff ...”

In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the character of Malvolio is an upstanding citizen with delusions of chivalry and grandeur. After he scolds a group of revellers for their behaviour, they forge a letter from the perspective of his love, Olivia. The letter asks him to perform feats of greatness to win her heart, but although each feat is patently ridiculous, his romantic nature clouds his reason and he believes the letter is real. At one point, he reads aloud from the letter:

*Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em. Thy Fates open their hands; let thy blood and spirit embrace them ...*

Mark Cavendish is no Shakespeare. Yet his powerful affirmation has the same weight of meaning. When your “Fates open their hands”, don't be afraid of greatness, and “don't let anyone tell you that you can't do stuff.” Let your blood and spirit embrace every possibility they offer.

### **A prayer for today**

*So, what stuff would you have me tackle today, I wonder?*