

9th December 2021

Dedication

“But still try, for who knows what is possible.”

Michael Faraday, as quoted in ‘The Life and Letters of Faraday’ by Henry Bence Jones

The quote above, from the 19th century English scientist, Michael Faraday, offers the essence of guidance to any young person setting out on the adventure of life, or anyone offering themselves to an important task.

Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, has just come to an end. The word means “dedication” in Hebrew, and the celebration comes from the religious history of the Jews. Under the control of the Syrians, they had been forbidden from worshipping God. King Antiochus had erected a statue of himself in Jerusalem’s Temple and *this* was what they were to worship. But the Jews were dedicated to their religion, their laws and their God and refused to worship an idol. So, for three years, the Maccabees, a group of Jewish freedom-fighters, fought with the king and the Syrians.

Dedication brought them victory, Jerusalem was recaptured, and the Temple reclaimed and rebuilt. Rededicating it to their God, the people lit a lamp as a symbol of God’s abiding presence. They only had enough oil for one day, but the light lasted for *eight*. It was a miracle! And from then on *Hanukkah*, the eight-day Festival of Lights, has been celebrated.

I love that story because it works at many different levels. But what strikes me today is the word *Hanukkah* itself – “dedication”. And the miracle? Not for me the oil lasting for eight times longer than it was supposed to, but the outworking of dedication itself.

Dedication brings its own miracles. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, do we not see that all the time – in health care, science, community care, foodbanks, Church life, the sustaining of all the infrastructures that maintain a stable society? We are surrounded – thank God – by some remarkable, committed and dedicated people.

Faraday is right! So, thank God for those who “still try” to find out “what is possible”. And let’s keep on lighting lights for them, long after *Hanukkah* is over for another year. Eight days of thankfulness for the miracle of dedication will never be enough.

A prayer for today

Loving God, I still try, even though I don’t yet know what’s possible.

Please accept my dedication today. Amen