

10th March 2022

Reward

“If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Bible, Matthew 10:42

Guidebooks for hill, glen and countryside walkers are liberally peppered with the word “reward”. Instructions like, “After a strenuous climb, you will be rewarded with ...”, “The rewards after this stretch are more than worth the effort ...”, “It’s not until this section has been completed that the reward is obvious ...” are common, usually followed by a description of the reward itself – a magnificent view, birds on a nature reserve, the highest summit in the region. You put in the effort, and you get the reward.

I went on a walk recently where the expected reward was a fabulous view over a mountain loch from the top of a range of hills. Reward? Not a bit of it. Half-way up, I was caught in a hailstorm. On the brow of the hill, I was almost knocked off my feet by a sudden gale. And when I turned back to see the view? Nothing! The loch, glen, and half the rest of the world was covered in mist. No photos – too wet for the camera. No lingering – too cold. No reward – at least, not the one the guidebook promised. Was the walk worth it? Of course. The reward was in the achievement, the memory, the contribution this walk made to my welfare. But reward as the guidebook defined it? Not a chance.

An interesting charity, *The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation* – www.randomactsofkindness.org – takes its name from frequently quoted words from Princess Diana:

*Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward,
safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.*

This was a familiar theme in the great guidebook that was Jesus’ teaching. Give your cup of water to that thirsty child – or show any “random act of kindness” – and there’s a reward you will never, ever lose.

The pay-back for goodness isn’t tangible, measurable, definable in any guidebook of life. It’s in the *doing*. The deal is to *do* the good we are called to do, with no expectation of reward.

A prayer for today – from St Ignatius Loyola

*Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and
not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will.*