

8th May 2022

Value

“Prayer never loses its value.”

Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 4:4

Following my reflections a while back on my struggles with prayer, I've greatly value the meaningful engagements with this issue which my thoughts have generated. I feel reassured that I am not alone ...

One comment took me to a favourite hymn, *Father, hear the prayer we offer*. It first appeared in the 1860s in a hymnary published in Boston over the name *Anonymous*. But it was later attributed to Love Maria Whitcomb Willis. Little is known of the writer, and this hymn is the only one of hers still in common use. The text of the hymn bears inclusion here.

*Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.*

*Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.*

*Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.*

*Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.*

In my struggles with prayer, I take comfort from these words. Prayer isn't easy, nor should I ever expect it to be. Prayer will take me to rugged places, which I neither wish for nor expect. Prayer expects me to move on and not to play safe. Prayer is offered with the expectation that it will do me some good, give me some strength, offer me some guidance.

So, in my struggles today, tenuously holding on to the truth that "prayer never loses its value", I'll simply use Love Maria Whitcomb Willis' words – with the expectation that they will say all that's needed for now.

A prayer for today

I think I'll just say the words above again and again – and leave it at that. Amen