

23rd March 2023

Others

“Let this be our rule for goodwill and helpfulness, that whenever we are able to assist others we should behave as stewards who must someday give an account of ourselves.”

John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* (1551)

[Baker Books, Michigan USA, 2004]

In his final sermon, known as “The Farewell Sermon”, delivered on the Ninth day of Dhul Hijjah around 630 AD, the Prophet Muhammad said:

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly.

It may seem strange to have a quote from Muhammad immediately following advice from the great Christian reformer, John Calvin. And yet, do their words not mesh together, coalesce around an important truth, that it is our purpose to pass on what is good – in words *and* in actions – to those who come after us, and, in the present, to those around us?

I regularly instance the advice, behaviour and maxims of my granny, as you know. Indeed, someone suggested recently that these are the parts of my “Thought for the Day” pieces she looks forward to the most. Well, be that as it may. But do we not all have “Tom’s granny” within us? Do we not carry examples of good behaviour, a righteous way of living, rules for “goodwill and helpfulness”, that will enhance the lives of others? Are we not a depository of wisdom that we are duty bound to pass on, so that those around us might understand things even better than we do? Someday *we* might have to give an account of ourselves ...

I had a poster in my study years ago as a reminder of the responsibility to the people I worked with, which was headed “Children learn what they live”. (See <https://childrenlearnwhattheylive.com>) With the children of God around us, we *live* goodness, not for our benefit or for its own sake, but so that others might be influenced by what they see in us.

I heard a comment recently about a preacher: “Now, *that’s* a sermon I’ll remember!” Good, I say! But even better, surely, if the hearer takes the words that have been heard directly and *lives* them by passing them on.

A prayer for today

*Lord, let me live your Word so clearly that other might see, and know,
your Love and your Wisdom in ever greater measure. Amen*