

Thought for the day - Sep/Oct 2021

by Forbes Mutch

Monday 27th

On Earth as it is in Heaven (1)

I'm sitting on the veranda of a friend's farmhouse in the lee of the Shropshire Hills. It's early evening, late spring. The sun has taken its leave but a legacy of light and warmth remain.

The seven-acre meadow rolls down to a brook, where small trout dart beneath the weeds. On the bank, the trees murmur as if discussing the fading day.

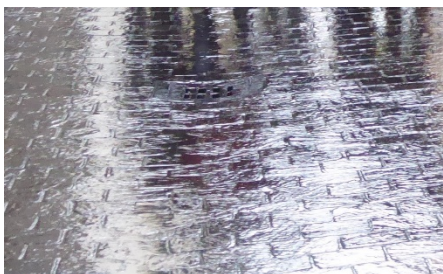
I look up from my book and watch the clouds darken. The first drops of a passing shower splash in the garden pond.

I'm dry beneath the shelter of a thatched awning and I consider the rain. It's peaceful. It's passive. It poses no threat. And then I remember:

*The rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there until they have watered the earth,
Making it bring forth and sprout,
Giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater.*
(Isaiah 55:10 - NRSV)

So that's ok, then. I don't have to resent the rain.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Tuesday 28th

On Earth as it is in Heaven (2)

My friends and I gather in the kitchen as the evening draws in.

A cork is pulled and the rich sound of wine being poured halts the conversation. We laugh, but are not sure why. Is it the pleasure of shared community or the community of shared pleasure?

A wooden board is set down in the centre of the table, spread with warm loaves and cold meat and soft cheese. We sit and laugh some more.

A vague feeling of guilt comes over me; guilt because we are eating well and so many people in the world go hungry. And then I remember:

I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat and drink and enjoy themselves.

(Ecclesiastes 8:15 - NRSV)

So that's ok, then. I don't feel guilty about enjoying a meal with friends.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Wednesday 29th

On Earth as it is in Heaven (3)

In the morning, we clear away the debris from the night before and set out across the fields in single file. We head for the low hills as the sun breaks through the early mist.

The path is stony and rugged and becomes a steep climb.

As we walk, I look down at my boots and consider the miles that they have covered. They are nearing the end of their life but have served me well - up mountains, through forests, along valleys, across foreign fields.

The memories are fierce and vivid: Scotland, Wales, Cumbria, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Devon, France, Corsica, Cyprus, North and South America, the Amazon. My walking has been a geography lesson.

I tread carefully along a cliff edge, not hurrying, taking my time.

I wonder why I have always been a cautious walker, never rushing, considering and rethinking the options and treading carefully. Some journeys are harder than others. And then I remember:

Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

(Matthew 7:14)

So, that's ok then, I'll take my time.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Thursday 30th

On Earth as it is in Heaven (4)

We descend from the summit of the slopes around midday. The sun is warm and we ease ourselves down beside a stream and settle for lunch in the shade of a Scotch pine tree.

The Scotch pine is a hardy tree and sometimes grows singularly on a hillside or is planted in a clump to provide a windbreak. It grows well in a variety of different conditions. It can cope with sodden weather or drought. It is the epitome of adaptability.

I suddenly think of my religion. *'Of course, that's right,'* I think, *'my faith is like a Scotch pine - sprouting when watered, surviving in dry conditions, maturing and changing shape but never losing its greenness'.*

I consider sharing this thought with the others, but fear it sounds corny. I keep it to myself, feeling embarrassed. And then I remember:

*He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*
(Psalm 1:3)

So that's ok, then, to have my thought. And I cherish it.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Friday 1st

On Earth as it is in Heaven (5)

It is the end of the day and we are weary from our walk.

As we make our way home in the gathering dusk, along a winding track beneath dripping trees, we catch sight of a light in the distance. It appears and disappears as we move through the bushes, as if it's sending a code in Morse.

As we get closer, the darkness around us grows and the light shines brighter.

I'm not familiar with the countryside around here and it takes me a while to realise that we are nearly at the end of our walk and the glow is coming from our host's kitchen window. He has left a small lamp burning on a shelf inside, next to the back door of the farmhouse.

I chide our friend for leaving it burning all day. He smiles quietly to himself and says something about a guiding light. And then I remember:

People do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone...

(Matthew 5:15 - NIV)

So that's ok, then, for my friend to leave a lamp burning. And I welcome it as it welcomes me.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Saturday 2nd

On Earth as it is in Heaven (6)

After our long walk, my friends and I decide that it would be prudent to get an early night.

I climb the stairs to my room in the attic. I sit on the edge of the bed, flexing the toes of my left foot while easing off the artificial limb that I've worn since my right leg was amputated a few years back. It doesn't hurt but, at times like this, I can feel the missing toes. It's called ghost pain.

I lie back on the bed and stare at the ceiling and catch a glimpse of the moon through the sloping skylight, shining brightly behind scudding clouds. I close my eyes.

As I'm drifting off to sleep, I realise that I haven't got undressed; I haven't turned out the light, I haven't phoned my parents as I promised, I haven't said my prayers.

I start to get off the bed. And then I remember:

He said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest".

(Mark 6:31 - NIV)

So that's ok, then, God wants me to finish a great day in peace. I fall asleep with the light on.

Forbes Mutch (Lay Leader of Worship)



Sunday 3rd

On Earth as it is in Heaven (7)

In the morning, I gather my things and prepare to leave my friends in the farmhouse of our host.

We have slept soundly and there is fresh energy in the kitchen, as coffee starts the day. They are going to visit some local caves; I am heading home to London.

'It's been good,' they say. 'You should come again.'

I think back over the past few days: the peace of the countryside; the companionship of friends, the fun of shared meals, the walking together, the relaxation of physical tiredness. It has been good.

But I have to move on. Got to get on with the next thing; back to the hurly burly of life. And then I remember:

Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.
(Job 12:12)

So that's ok, then, to pause and think about the past, to enjoy life's encounters, not to be always looking for the next new thing.

Thank you Lord for happy memories and experiences. The Kingdom of Heaven is all around us. Amen

Forbes Mutch, Lay Reader of Worship

