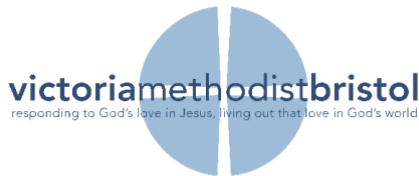

LENT KNIT-ALONG 2025

WEEK 3



Pattern by Lyn Lloyd-Jones
Reflections by Andrew S M Clark

Introduction

Our thanks go this week to Rev. Andrew S M Clark for writing the accompanying reflections for week three of the Lent Knitalong.

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Sunday, 16 March

Wild Goose Chase

You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

— John 3: 7-9



The highlight of my summers growing up in Scotland was when, for a solitary week, we'd pack some clothes into the family car and head to the 'tropical south' for our holidays! By 'tropical south', I mean Berwick-upon-Tweed! Honestly...the way my mother packed, you'd think we were going to the Canary Islands! Nothing fancy – just a well-known holiday park at Haggerston Castle with plenty of fun for us kids.

I firmly believe one of our first holidays there was my first encounter with the Holy Spirit. We had gone to visit the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, accessible at certain times of the day when the tide is out and the causeway is passable.

I walked through a turnstile gate on Church Lane, by the Crown and Anchor pub, to walk through the field beside the monastery in the main settlement on the island. All perfectly innocent... until... all of a sudden, there was a tremendous honking noise coming very closely behind me. Looking round, all I could see was the wide-winged, wide-beaked visage of a Canada Goose running full pelt towards me! I have never been a runner, but I bolted! We told that story for years! (I escaped unharmed!)

Imagine my surprise when, learning about Celtic Christianity many years later, I hear that they described the Holy Spirit as a Wild Goose! Wild, untameable, exciting, clear-focussed and... frankly... alarming! We're used to the Holy Spirit being described as the gentle dove, but to the Celtic saints, He was the Wild Goose calling them to exciting adventures for Jesus and the gospel! Wild as the goose and mysterious as the wind!

I like to think that some mischievous Christian spotted my Wild Goose chase that day and prayed, 'Lord, will you continue to pursue that young man all the days of his life?' Even if they didn't, that's what God did, and all you can do is join in the journey!

Reflect

Is there a time in my life where I've sensed the wildness of the call of God on my life?

Prayer

Lord, come to me freely and as you choose. Waken me from my comfortable slumber and help me strike out with you on new faith adventures. Amen

Monday, 17 March

Peregrini

This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

- Jeremiah 6:16



It was a good number of years after the Wild Goose chase that I would encounter the living Lord Jesus. Not having grown up at all in a Christian home, everything was indeed new and exciting, but also deeply grounding. I didn't have a settled home life and so when Christ came, he paradoxically gave me a firm and steady footing as well as putting in me a heart for action! Shortly after becoming a Christian at 15 years old, I was caught up in

the hustle and bustle of service in The Salvation Army, where I'd spend the first 10 years of full-time ministry as a Salvation Army officer. That response to the Holy Spirit's leading would take me to work in the East End of Glasgow, central London, Pill and Portishead just outside Bristol, Wick and Aberdeen... including trips to Romania, Russia, Belgium and France on Salvation Army mission.

The Celtic saints, encountering the Holy Spirit, discovered that he was a missionary Holy Spirit. They felt compelled to strike new ground for the gospel in largely pagan Britain, in spite of the small remnant of Christian faith that had arrived with the Romans. But by the time the Romans left these British shores, the so-called 'Dark Ages' had begun, and the Lord placed in the hearts of the Celtic saints the seed for peregrination! Perhaps you're thinking of the peregrine falcon... another wild bird! Peregrini (noun), from the Latin, means 'pilgrims', 'wanderers', and 'resident foreigners.' All those descriptions were true of these Celtic saints, and taking to the ancient paths of Britain on persistent walking mission was where they found their peace and rest at the centre of God's plan for them.

Reflection

Are we willing to walk, either physically or metaphorically, into the places, lives and situations that God would have us enter with his love and compassion?

Prayer

Lord, give me a soft heart to love, and strengthen my ankles as I prepare to enter the situations you call me to. May I always be ready to move at the impulse of your love. Amen.

Tuesday, 18 March

Place of Resurrection

Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

— Revelation 21:9-14



The Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the surrounding area have become, for me, a regular place of pilgrimage. I visit at least once a year. I settle into a little room at the Lindisfarne Inn, just off the busy A1, and travel to places that have become Holy to me. They are places where I am met by God. It sometimes feels like God lives there and I am visiting Him, even though I know that not to be accurate. I love to walk the lanes of

Northumberland and imagine the peregrini Celtic saints moving from village to village, meeting people for gospel instruction at the newly erected Celtic crosses illustrated with scenes from the Old and New Testament – 8th century PowerPoint slides!

The Celtic saints were looking for places to share the gospel, but they were also waiting for something else. They had the idea that part of their earthly journey was to carry the gospel to the place where God would have them stop and stay. They called it their 'place of Resurrection' on the understanding that the Lord would take them to the place where they'd live, die and be buried – and from that place, they'd experience their resurrection from the dead and walk the streets of gold in the New Heavens and the New Earth – the Christian's hope!

This hope was the root of their joy, and the inspiration that enabled the Celts to endure the hardships and harsh conditions of their day with all the perils of the period. You never knew when death, sickness, persecution or Vikings would come to your door. All that mattered was that you'd been obedient to the Spirit and arrived at the place where God was going to plant you!

Reflection

Do you have a sense that the place you are in is the place you're supposed to be? Is the Spirit moving you on, or is this a place you will wait for Him?

Prayer

Lord, there is a time and season for everything: a time to move and a time to be planted. Speak to me in this season of Lent about where you would have me be. Give me the shining hope of seeing the New Jerusalem in all its glorious splendour when Christ brings it down from Heaven. Amen.

Wednesday, 19 March

North Sea Prayers

*Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.*

*If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?*

— Psalm 130:1-3



Cuthbert's life changed when, one night, he was out tending sheep in the Lammermuir Hills in the wilds of Northumbria, which at that time, straddled over the Scottish border. Reminiscent of the appearance of angels to the shepherds outside Bethlehem, Cuthbert's vision was of angels carrying the body of a holy man to glory from the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

Turns out, the night of his vision was the night that the beloved St Aidan's peregrini was over and his resurrection journey had begun. Cuthbert took this vision to be a call to the same destiny, and to the Christian ministry. Celtic Christianity was largely monastic, and so he took himself to Melrose Abbey and became a student of St Boisil, and eventually reluctantly took on the role of Bishop of Lindisfarne in the footsteps of Aidan.

There can be some green-tinted spectacles placed over the romance of Celtic Christianity, as if it was all swirly green patterns and dancey-flutey music, warm fires and a pint of mead. That couldn't be further from the truth. The Celtic saints were hard core! They were soundly committed to the asceticism and sparseness of monastic commitment. This included long fasts, copious amounts of learning, study and manual labour, and more!

St Cuthbert, not content with the rigors of the monastery, spent many of his years on smaller, more remote islands off the coast of Northumberland. There, his habit was to go and deal with his 'demons', and to engage in prayerful warfare on behalf of his people. His idea of fun was to stand naked in the North Sea for hours and recite psalms with hands raised. Legend has it that, when he had completed his prayers, he'd return to land and the otters would come and dry his feet.

Reflection

Does my Christian faith have any degree of self-denial, in order that I can get to the end of my self-preoccupation and live, at least for a moment, for God alone?

Prayer

Lord, may I see your heavenly vision of angels and respond wholeheartedly with my life, even beyond the edge of my comfort in a life of devotion to your ways. Amen

Thursday, 20 March

Stones-throw from civilisation

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

— Matthew 6:6



For all that the Celtic monastic communities could be places of rigorous discipleship for the residents, they weren't shut off places. The rule of St Columba, the Irish saint who established the monastic settlement on the Isle of Iona, was clear that the Celtic communities were to be communities of proximity! His rule said, 'Be alone in a separate place near a chief city, if your conscience is not prepared to be in common with the

crowd.' Yes, they needed the set apart places, but merely a stones-throw from civilisation.

Now, I hear you thinking, 'I'm sure that Iona and Lindisfarne are pretty remote places'. Well, perhaps if you're thinking about travelling over land and sea, you are right. But in the centuries at the height of the Celtic monastics, the land was where the dangerous travel routes were. You were safer and quicker jumping into your boat, and the waters between Africa, Spain, Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland and the coastal islands of West Scotland were joined by a massive liquid highway frequently traversed. The community on Lindisfarne, for example, had a direct view over the tidal sands to Bamburgh to the castle and capital of Northumbria where the saints prayed over the affairs of the day, keeping ever watchful.

The Celts were seeking to bring together the tension of being 'in the world, but not of it.' The missionary call demanded close engagement with king and people alike, but the call to prayer and Christian life needed a place where the doors could be closed and where God was the lone audience for their devotion.

For Lindisfarne in particular, the tide governed their seasons of engagement and withdrawal. Tide out? Go out into the highways and byways. Tide in? Come and settle in

the place of prayer. There is a time to engage, and a time to withdraw. But don't be misled – the Celtic monastics were not stuffed away in the seclusion of the cloister. They were locatable, visible and engaged with the people.

Reflection

What about me? Is my tide in, or is it out? Do I need to engage or withdraw for a season? Do I need to get out and love, or enter the secret place and commune with the Father?

Prayer

Lord, equip me for all my going out and receive me when I come in. Wherever I go, I know your presence is with me. Help me to stay close to you, but close to those who need to hear of your love. Amen.

Friday, 21 March

Open Hospitality



On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

— John 4:1-3

In between the rigorous life of prayer, the gates to the Celtic monastic settlements were open. Close to the entrance was the hospital building. Yes – it did as it said on the tin: they'd tend the sick and exercise a ministry of healing and health. It was also a place where the strangers would be welcomed and where sanctuary could be found. Travelers could find rest for weary feet and pilgrims strength for their onward journey.

In the prayer known as the Celtic Rune of Hospitality, we read:

I saw a stranger yester'en.

I put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place and in the sacred name of the Triune

He blessed myself and my house, my cattle and my dear ones, and the lark sang in her song

often, often, often

goes Christ in the stranger's guise.

St Brigid, who founded the monastic community in Kildare, was a practical gal! On hearing that her double monasteries (one for men and one for women) which she led as Abbess

had run out of beer, she employed her master brewer skills and turned bathwater used by lepers into beer! (Yes... I know...)

This was the prayer that followed: *'I would wish a great lake of ale for the King of Kings; I would wish the family of heaven to be drinking it throughout life and time.'*

In addition to healthcare, rest and food, the monasteries were creative places. They were where great illuminated manuscripts were painted, where children and adults were taught to read and write, where you could get your clothes mended or your horse re-shod. They were places of practicality. And do you know what? I recon there were a fair few knitters...

Reflection

Is my church, and am I, in that place of offering ready and practical hospitality that meets the need of a hurting, broken world? Am I creating beauty that points to the glory of God for all to see?

Prayer

Lord, I thank you that you have created a warm, hospitable place for me in the family household of God. Thank you that I can come in and eat freely, without cost, of your provision. Amen

Saturday, 22 March

Barefoot



'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

— Matthew 25:37-40

Radical prayer, radical mission, radical obedience, radical hospitality – living on the edges of the world fuelled by the power of the Wild Goose in search for the City of God. What a life!

And yet, in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 13, that great love chapter, we recognise that it's possible to do amazing things but to do them without love and just be a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal – in other words, all noise and clamour! Jesus said that it is by our love for one another that we will be marked out as his disciples. By the time the church had been birthed in the pages of Acts, the disciples were known for their practical expression of love

in care for the poor, having sold their houses and possessions and laying the proceeds at the feet of the disciples to distribute.

St Aidan was a man who knew privilege, but never kept it. Having been invited by King Oswald to set up the monastery at Lindisfarne, he was given every resource you could imagine. Legend has it that Oswald felt that a great man of God should not walk the lanes on foot, and so he gifted Aidan a fine royal horse. Well, Aidan used it for about half a day. Coming across a poor peasant, he instantly recognised Christ in him and gifted him the horse, much to the chagrin of Oswald. What else was a man of God to do but give what he had no desire to keep to one who needed it much more than he?

What an amazing gospel truth to take to heart. Our walk in this world should be metaphorically barefoot – taking care of the poor as if we were serving Christ himself. This life of loving service speaks above the loudest verbal proclamations of truth.

Reflection

Where have I seen Christ in the poor recently? Did I reach out to love and serve him?

Prayer

Lord, may my life tell the story of your compassionate love and mercy through every action. May my worship be complete because I love the poor as Jesus did. Amen.

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