

Rector's Letter – February 2019

Dear Friends,

*'How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman,
dropped in the middle of a forgotten Spot in the Caribbean by
providence, impoverished, in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a
scholar?'*



So begins the eponymous song from the hit musical Hamilton. From humble beginnings, Alexander Hamilton became one of the Founding Fathers of the USA, alongside George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical masterpiece had its origins in a biography of Alexander Hamilton which he read with gusto and increasing excitement. However, without the painstaking work of Alexander's wife, Elizabeth, who devoted countless hours to compiling his papers, ensuring that he gained the credit he deserved for his work and searching for a biographer up to the task, there would have been no biography for him to read. Her essential role in bringing Alexander's story to light and, thereby, in the inception of the musical is referenced in the song which follows his untimely death through the pistol shot of a political enemy in a duel.

Borne of love, Elizabeth's conscientious attention to Alexander's legacy led me to think of Mary's contemplative quality. They seem to share a readiness to weigh up what they have seen and heard, and reach a proper understanding of their experience. When the shepherds told Mary and Joseph what the 'angel of the Lord' had told them about their baby up on the hillside by the town, Luke narrates that 'Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.' After his parents had finally found Jesus in the Temple after an increasingly anxious search around Jerusalem, Jesus told them that they should have looked in the Temple first because they should have known that he would be in his 'Father's house.' Luke instructs us that 'Mary treasured all these things in her heart.'

In a busy culture characterised by instant reactions, the need to stop and carefully consider what to think, do and say is especially important. By pausing, we interrupt the often frenetic pace of life. Rather than hurtle from one appointment to another barely noticing the people around us or the situations we are encountering, we should stop to gain insights that can inform our words and actions. Taking time to reflect and to reach a measured conclusion before acting enables us to act wisely and to make better decisions. Thereby we enrich our lives and those who relate to us. Learning to love others is central to Christian discipleship and that means taking time to deliberate prayerfully before we respond to people and problems.

This February offers us a particular time for weighing-up the Biblical stories of Christmas and Epiphany. We can mull over the incarnation and the revelatory episodes of divine glory in the life of Jesus – 'the visit of the Magi' and the 'Miracle at the Wedding in Cana' for instance - before we begin the journey to the Cross that begins on 6th March, Ash Wednesday. In preparation for this Lenten journey, I commend to you that Quiet Morning on the first Saturday in March. The first call, of course, on our attention is God, and I round off with an image from psalm 131 of a baby cradled by his mother, with baby and mother held in each other's rapt gaze.

*O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time on and forevermore*

With love,

David Tomlinson

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