**Ministerial Meandering**

This might seem like an odd way to start a meandering, but I have been thinking (a rare event in itself) that when we get past big events in the church’s year - like Easter - it is all too easy just to let things go a bit.

Speaking for myself, I know that I find it hard to gather up enough energy to keep going sometimes, and that is when I need to pray and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to ‘charge up my batteries; for me.

I remember when I was training with the Royal Marines, we had a number of particularly unpleasant courses that had to be ‘enjoyed’ - the Endurance course, the ‘Tarzan’ course, the Battlefield course - all of which ended with a ‘quick run’ back to camp, which was down a particularly windy road aptly named ‘Heartbreak Lane’, where we could see the camp in the distance, but because of all the twists and turns in the road, we never seemed to get any nearer to it. This ‘gentle run’ home was done with a bergen weighing seemingly tons on your back and carrying a weapon.

We learned perseverance and dogged determination - if we didn’t fall literally by the wayside. At the end of the run we had to fire at targets and score at least 80% accuracy to be allowed to ‘end-ex’ and go to the showers and food. I don’t think I’d fare so well these days…but there was a time I could do it!

I am particularly fond of Isaiah 46:4, which says, ‘Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.’

Those of you who are younger might find some of Paul’s exhortations to the Philippians more apposite; ‘…being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus,’ or, ‘…But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”’

Every day we need encouragement, every day we need to be reassured that we live in the love of God in Christ Jesus, every day we need to remind ourselves that we ***can*** work out God’s purpose for our lives - if we give our will over to Him who knows us better than we know ourselves.

Again, I find myself telling you things you already know, so I have to ask myself how to make them ‘new’ to you. Perhaps that’s where my frog and heron cartoon comes in; we need to feel what it is like to be in the process of being swallowed up by worldly pursuits and pressures - what you forgot off the shopping list, what you ***still*** haven’t repaired around the house that your spouse has asked you to deal with so many times, that the dogs need grooming and you need to get around to clipping their nails, that you haven’t even thought of a birthday present for that special person yet…and it’s only 48 hours away…

And so on.

How easy it is to be swallowed up by such concerns! Luke 10:42 tells us how to avoid those distractions; ‘only one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, and it will not be taken away from her.’

Mary was able to pull her head out of the throat of the voracious heron, and effectively slap the bird around the beak and say, ‘Not me, pal - I have other priorities before feeding your appetites.’

Matthew 6:33 has it nailed in one; ‘But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’

Can’t say fairer than that.

Philip+