

“Faith is homesickness” FB ~ Midweek Reflection # 36, Wed. Feb 18, 2009

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4 NIV

My sermon preparation and spiritual reading this past week have led me to a number of good words on faith and its implications for the believer which I want to share with you.

“Faith is the touching of a mystery, it is to perceive another dimension to absolutely everything in the world. In faith, the mysterious meaning of life comes alive. Beneath the simple, explicable, one-dimensional surface of things their genuine content begins to shine... To speak in the simplest possible terms: faith sees, knows, senses... the presence of God in the world.”

Alexander Schmemmann, Celebration of Faith , St. Vladimir’s Press, 1991, Crestwood, NY pp. 59-60

“When the clouds [of doubt] move in, we still have trouble remembering the vision on the mountaintop. It is a hard lesson to learn : that we should trust those rare moments of clear insight and heightened joy that are granted from time to time, and should let them help us through the long hours of doubt and sadness. These other times will come; if you don’t know it already, you can believe me, but when we can no longer see the hand of the Heavenly Father, we may still hear the voice; ‘This is my Son...; listen to him!’ “

B.A. Gerrish, The Pilgrim Road , Louisville, Ky. : Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, pp. 59-60

“Faith is different from theology because theology is reasoned, systematic, orderly whereas faith is disorderly, intermittent, and full of surprises. Faith is different from mysticism because mystics in their ecstasy become one with what faith can at most see only from afar. Faith is different from ethics because ethics is primarily concerned not, like faith, with our relationship to God but with our relationship to each other. Faith is closest perhaps to worship because like worship it is essentially a response to God and involves the emotions and the physical senses as well as the mind, but worship is consistent, structured, single-minded and seems to know what it’s doing while faith is a stranger and exile on the earth and doesn’t know for certain about anything. Faith is homesickness. Faith is a lump in the throat. Faith is less a position on than a movement toward, less a sure thing than a hunch. Faith is waiting. Faith is journeying through space and through time.

If someone were to come up to me and ask me to talk about my faith, it is exactly that journey that I would eventually have to talk about ~ the ups and downs of the years, the dreams, the odd moments, the intuitions. I would have to talk about the occasional sense I have that life is not just a series of events causing other events as haphazardly as a break shot in pool causes the billiard balls to careen off in all directions but that life has a plot the way a novel has a plot, that events are somehow or other leading somewhere. Whatever your faith may be or my faith may be, it seems to me inseparable from the story of what has happened to us.”

Frederich Buechner, Faith and Fiction in The Clown in the Belfry Writings on Faith and Fiction, Harper SanFrancisco, 1992, p 12

May your faith increase and lead to perseverance as you travel “Home” to God during this Lenten season.

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie