

Aidan's Way Day 11

A Spirituality of Walking

Thank you for joining me in prayer right at the half-way point of my three-week pilgrimage from Iona to Lindisfarne in the footsteps of Saint Aidan, praying the Bible together each day in our usual way. This is my last full day walking the John Muir Way and I'm somewhere northeast of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, and northwest of Edinburgh, its capital. On days like these creation itself seems to be rejoicing: the river banks ablaze with wild flowers, the birds singing, fish jumping, seeds being carried on the breeze. It's a great day to be alive.¹

(Want to know more about this unique series on pilgrimage? Check out the special introductory day, "An Introduction to Pilgrimage").

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly, to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

High King of Heaven, would You walk with me and talk with me as I seek to follow in the footsteps of Your servant Aidan today? I have set my heart on pilgrimage, so challenge me and change me, cleanse and rearrange me, until the fire that burned in Aidan's heart, burns brightly in mine.

Rejoice and Reflect

As I continue walking beside the dark waters of the Forth and Clyde Canal, and approach the town of Falkirk which stands at the junction of two major waterways, I rejoice in the river of God, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 46:

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalm 46:4-7 (ESVUK)

Pause and pray

I can't quite get my head around it but somehow, simply by putting one foot in front of the other, I've covered 150 miles across half the country. So perhaps it's a good day to be thinking about the spirituality of walking, beginning by focusing on a beautiful invitation from Jesus...

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

Isn't it extraordinary that Jesus never hurried? With just three years to save the world, He still made time for fishing trips, picnics, and parties, which means that He was officially less busy than most pastors. 'Let me make one observation,' writes Kosuke Koyama in his book *Three Mile an Hour God*, '[God] walks "slowly" because he is love. If he is not love he would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed... It is the speed we walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks.'²

Ask

Thinking ahead to the busyness of the coming day, I ask the Lord to help me slow down, to make me interruptible, walking with each person I meet at 'the speed of love'.

Pause and pray

Thinking now of someone who seems especially stressed and exhausted, I pray the words of this famous hymn over their life today:

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.³

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine the expression on Jesus' face as He speaks these words directly to me...

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 11: 28-30 (MSG)

John Muir, upon whose trail I am currently walking, advocated 'sauntering' in the wilds, rather than hiking. "Away back in the middle ages," he explained, "people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when ... asked where they were going they would reply, 'A la sainte terre,' 'To the Holy Land'. And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers."⁴ I love this. And it makes me think that maybe one of the ways I can make my journey through the coming day a mini-pilgrimage, and the places I stand holy ground, is simply to saunter. By slowing down to three miles an hour, I can become more present to the people I meet, and to the presence of the God whose name is 'I Am' in each passing moment.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield to the Lord's grace and pace once again in the words of the pilgrim's credo:

I am not in control.
I am not in a hurry.
I walk in faith and hope.
I greet everyone with peace.
I bring back only what God gives me.⁵

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the slow pilgrimage of the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Jeremiah:

"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 soul."

Personalised from Jeremiah 6:16 (NIVUK)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

¹You can follow Pete's pilgrimage and hear the occasional song inspired by the journey on 'The Pilgrim Podcast' available at www.PeteGreig.info.

²Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God* (London, SCM Press Ltd, 1979), p7.

³The words of the hymn, 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' were adapted from a longer poem, 'The Brewing of Soma', written by American Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, and published by Garrett Horder in his 1884 *Congregational Hymns*.

⁴Recounted by Albert W. Palmer in *The Mountain Trail and Its Message* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1911).

⁵Murray Bodo O.F.M, 'The Place We Call Home'.