

## Aidan's Way Day 14

# Celtic Mission and Learning

Thank you for joining me in prayer on this the fourteenth day of my three-week pilgrimage from Iona to Lindisfarne in the footsteps of Saint Aidan, praying the Bible together in our usual way. Today I'm walking through the rolling hills of the Scottish Borders. The landscape may be less romantic than the dramatic Highland mountains of last week, but it's truly wild and deserted, less touristy, just grass, bracken and the occasional clump of trees as far as the eye can see. I wonder if it looked like this for Aidan 1400 years ago? Lost in my thoughts I feel peaceful and free.<sup>1</sup>

(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

I choose to rejoice in God's leading today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's pilgrim people in the words of Psalm 86:

Teach me your ways, O LORD,  
that I may live according to your truth!  
Grant me purity of heart,  
so that I may honour you.  
With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God.  
I will give glory to your name forever,  
for your love for me is very great.  
You have rescued me from the depths of death.

**Psalm 86:11-13 (NLT)**

## Pause and pray

Over the last couple of days, I've explored four of the six practices at the heart of Lectio 365 through the lens of Celtic spirituality. Two days ago it was creativity and prayer, and yesterday justice and hospitality. And so today I turn to focus now on the final pair of practices: mission and learning, drawing inspiration once again from Aidan's life but also from Christ's Great Commission...

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Matthew 28:16-20 (ESVUK)**

Aidan must surely have reflected on these words as he walked these hills all those years ago. Why was he walking? Because Jesus had told him to 'Go and make disciples of nations' and the nation to which he'd been sent was Northumbria. Aidan's biographer recalls how "He traversed both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity. Wherever on his way he saw any, either rich or poor, he invited them, if pagans, to embrace the mystery of the faith; or if they were believers, he sought to strengthen them in their faith."<sup>2</sup> This highly relational approach to evangelism, no doubt inspired by Christ's personal example and the blueprint set out here in his Great Commission, focused first and foremost on making disciples. As such it was personal rather than political, bottom-up rather than top-down. And yet by focusing quietly on one person at a time, Aidan eventually discipled Northumbria. In fact, Joseph Lightfoot, a former bishop of Durham, went further arguing that while 'Augustine (who brought the Catholic faith to Britain) was the Apostle of Kent (a county in southeast England)... Aidan was the Apostle of England.'<sup>3</sup>

# Ask

It's an extraordinary thought that I'll only meet two types of people today: those who need an invitation 'to embrace the mystery of faith', and Christians whose faith I can strengthen. And so I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me now, giving me words, and helping me simply to be brave with each individual I encounter today.

**Pause and pray**

I ask the Holy Spirit to place on my heart now a particular evangelist, church planter, or missionary praying for them to be en-couraged – literally filled with fresh courage – today.

**Pause and pray**

# Yield

***As I return to the passage, I notice what it says about the importance of education as well as proclamation in advancing the Kingdom...***

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Matthew 28:16-20 (ESVUK)**

The Greek word for disciple is *mathetes* meaning student, pupil or apprentice. The Celtic apostles understood that you cannot spiritualise salvation away from education of the mind – 'teaching them' (Matt. 28:20), and transformation of the heart – baptising them (Matt. 28:19). All Aidan's monasteries incorporated schools teaching literacy skills in Latin and other languages. 'His course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times,' notes his biographer, the Venerable Bede, 'that all those who bore him company... had to study.'<sup>4</sup>

**Pause and pray**

## Yielding Prayer

Placing my hand on my head...

*Holy Spirit, ignite in me the fire that burned in Aidan's mind, that I might love You more with all of mine (Mark 12:30). Stretch my thinking, stimulate my intellect, inspire me with a renewed love of learning.*

Placing my hand on my heart...

*Holy Spirit, ignite in me the fire that burned in Aidan's heart, that I might truly love the lost. Renew my passion for Your gospel and my compassion for those who haven't yet embraced 'the mystery of faith'.*

## Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me reassures me...

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, proving yourself to be my disciple. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love.

**Personalised from John 15:8-9 (NIVUK)**

## Closing Prayer

### Sabbath Blessing

***May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.***

***May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.***

***May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.***

***May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness.***

***May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.<sup>5</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup>You can follow Pete's pilgrimage and hear the occasional song inspired by the journey on 'The Pilgrim Podcast' available at [www.PeteGreig.info](http://www.PeteGreig.info).

<sup>2</sup>Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (London: Penguin Books, 1955; Revised ed. 1990), p150.

<sup>3</sup>Bishop Joseph Lightfoot, *Leaders in the Northern Church. Sermons Preached in the Diocese of Durham*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: MacMillan & Co.,1899), p .221.

<sup>4</sup>Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup>Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, [PeteGreig.info](http://PeteGreig.info).