

## **Reflection for April 6, 2025**

### **Endurance Training – Inspired by Isaiah 43:16-21 and John 12:1-8**

I had a plan. I had run in the 10K BMO Classic the year before so why not up the ante and go for something grander. Yes, I will train for the half marathon! It was May of 2011, the run in October. Lots of time.

I began down at the track at TRU. A couple of laps at first then 3 and 4. That's about a mile, I think. I did that several times a week. I think probably every second day. My brother, who is a runner, advised to put in some "wind sprints" too so I added those. Once around the track then a 100 m sprint, slow down, another loop, another 100 m sprint. I recall the first few weeks being brutal. The heart in the throat kind of thing after 10 min or so.

However, I graduated to a few laps then once around the university campus. Then twice around (about 5 km). Soon enough I was down at Riverside Park running over the bridge and out by the river through N. Kamloops. I varied the route and kept at it - 10 km, 12 km. I was getting stronger.

When I was in Vancouver on business I would run along the waterfront by the Pan Pacific and then along the sea wall. It actually started to be enjoyable, something all runners tell you happens.

Well with the run in October I had to push a little harder. I made the big breakthrough in September. Lenore came with me. My goal was to purposefully run the route planned for the half marathon. We parked in Stanley Park, and I was off one Saturday morning. Along the sea wall, up to prospect point, all around the park, out into the city, over to the planetarium and back. In all, 19 km. I was pumped and Lenore was impressed. I was nearly ready.

A couple of weeks later I am in the Urologist's office. An ultrasound had shown something amiss with a kidney. Well, what to do doc? Some tests Ian. Let's see what is going on. Into the hospital one set of tests. Back home. Then back in. Scopes and such.

Say doc I said after the second array of tests, (because Lenore asked me to), I have a half marathon to run next week. Do you foresee any issues? Well, it's probably OK he says, but you might bleed. You need to be prepared for that. Well, the nurse promptly told me no half marathon for you and of course my sweetheart was adamant. Nyet, no way, no chance, nadda, not going to happen.

Dang it anyway, I was training to be a stallion and now the stallion was confined to the stable. I was not impressed. All that endurance training for nothing.

### **Lent is a reminder of endurance training.**

Isaiah reminds us of the incredible endurance of the Hebrew people during the exodus. They were led across the Red Sea with Pharaoh in hot pursuit. The hazardous marathon continued, an expedition into uncertainty which would last well over a generation. They are to eventually arrive in what we know to be modern day Israel, "the promised land," but in the interim much suffering ensues. Uncertainty, fear, a lack of confidence in Moses and a lack of trust in God develop.

Of course it did, faith can only do so much. Forty years in the wilderness is a very long time to wait in anxiety and deal with hardship. The land of “milk and honey” seemed a dream, not a reality.

Isaiah’s prophetic words are a hard sell to another community of exiles, another community enduring great hardship, the Judeans in Babylon. Seven hundred and fifty (750) or so years after Moses, Isaiah tries to encourage the Jewish people, by predicting an end to their seventy-year (70) imprisonment. He recalls Moses making a way through the Red Sea in escape. He recalls making a way in the wilderness as did the Hebrews in the first exile. Isaiah predicts God will give drink to all of God’s people. God will give sustenance, lift up, provide for, comfort. Isaiah intends to ignite reassurance among a people, who must have lost all hope of ever returning home. They had to endure hardship first.

There is a remarkable similarity between the Hebrews in Exodus, the Judeans in Isaiah and events of our time.

The Berlin Wall prevented people from fleeing from East to West Berlin. For twenty-eight (28) years countless families were torn apart, unable to see one another again. I can’t imagine the heartache they endured. Losing complete contact with someone you loved would be devastating.

The Palestinian people are to this day still unable to establish a true homeland. They are being squeezed out of real estate that they have called home for centuries. And they have no where to go. Along with shattered homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and places of worship, are shattered hopes and dreams. How much are they expected to endure?

Isaiah speaks about God doing a new thing. In all that we have witnessed in history and all we witness today, where is God in the lives of those that are asked to endure far too much? Where is God doing a new thing? Where is God making a way in our wilderness? I wonder because I often don’t recognize it.

I recall being very frustrated when I had to cancel my plan for the half marathon run. In retrospect however I know that I was “almost there.” I had glimpses of the achievement. I could feel it, sense it. I knew it was within my reach. For reasons outside of my immediate control, I was unable to get across the finish line. But that does not mean the goal is unachievable. Perhaps I shall try again and this time, perhaps a different result can be realized. That will be something new and a celebration.

As we follow Jesus through these 40 Lenten days, the requirement for great endurance stands clearly in front of us once more. Jesus moves further and further towards his destined conflict with the Roman authorities and Pilot. He endured both betrayal and denial by friends. He endured public ridicule and beating and finally, the physical and emotional torment of a barbaric execution.

I wonder if our Lenten time and recollection of Jesus’ journey asks us to be prayerfully mindful that times of celebration may one day be realized for the suffering of the world. Perhaps Isaiah’s prophesy can become a reality for those that endure heartache, grief, separation from loved ones, loss of home and homestead, and worst of all loss of hope. Perhaps there will be a time when God will do a new thing, **making a**

**way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters; making a way in the wilderness and waters in the desert;** a time when what has been endured is ended, and there will be a new beginning.

That is the promise that the belief in Jesus brings. Somewhere through the sometimes-excruciating pain of what is now, a thread of love is woven into being. That love grows into life in seeds of reconciliation, peace, forgiveness, and justice for all.

We follow a man who paved the way for that hope. We continue to follow him now on the way to Golgotha where some will try to extinguish his life and his spirit. But we know that doesn't happen. The Jesus then is the Jesus now. He endures the pain of the world with us. And his resurrection love keeps us hopeful.

Thanks for listening this morning.

Amen