

Isaiah 65: 17 – end Hebrews 11:32 – 12:2

Last week I came across a quote which caught my eye because it reflected an in joke I have with a friend **'Great weights hang on thin wires'**. It came with the explanation that it's a 17<sup>th</sup> century proverb implying that even those without real power can still prove instrumental in effecting change. I'd never come across this saying before but I wonder whether it might be behind one of my five-foot-nothing mum's favourite sayings that **'the best things come in small packages'**!

Digging a little deeper I found that the writer of the phrase was Francis Bacon – not the 20<sup>th</sup> century artist – but the late 16<sup>th</sup> early 17<sup>th</sup> century polymath who was both Attorney General and Lord Chancellor and the father of 'the scientific method'. And what he actually said was **'But such being the workmanship of God, as He doth hang the greatest weight on the smallest wires ....'** He was talking about the writing of history and saying that it was all very well writing about battles and state affairs, **'the pomp of business'**, but that you get a truer, more lively depiction if it is lives that are written about.

I wonder what your reaction was to the passage we heard from Hebrews? The author lays out before us the great achievements of the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us and tells us to keep running the race they started. Perhaps you felt very insignificant when you heard of those whose **'faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, shut the mouths of lions, were stoned to death, or sawn in two'**. And yet, those named were not perfect examples of humankind – take King David from the list for example, one who would certainly have got into trouble with the #MeToo movement. **God hangs the greatest weight on the smallest wires.** People like you and me are entrusted with his message.

You know how it is when you start looking in the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, or its digital equivalent ... you end up down a rabbit hole of sayings. And so it was with me. This next one is from Lewis Carroll, **'if you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there'**. It turns out that this is a paraphrase of a conversation between Alice in Wonderland and the Cat:

**Alice: 'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?' 'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to' said the Cat. 'I don't much care about where ...' said Alice. 'then it doesn't matter which way you go' said the Cat ' .... 'So long as I get SOMEWHERE' Alice added as an explanation. 'Oh you're sure to do that' said the Cat 'if you only walk long enough'.**

And I think with that quote in mind perhaps this next is by Terry Pratchett, from one of his Discworld novels:

**'If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are,  
and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going.  
And, if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong.'**

But as Christians we do know where we come from – we come from the creative energy of God. And we know where we're going – we're going to that Promised Land that was described by Isaiah. We have a companion on the way, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith himself, Jesus, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

And we are to join with all the imperfect saints who have gone before us in telling others that the perfect destination is the place we call Heaven and pointing them to the Way.