

Nuggets and Bright Lines

- Following Your Heart not The Crowd.
- Fear
- Faith



The Wilderness

I read an article yesterday about a work acquaintance of mine I had lost touch with. She wrote how she had lost her way when the dream of her career turned out not to be what she had imagined and desired. She wrote about her pain and sadness and about how she struggled and worked to do something about it amidst all the self doubt. Now, it appears, she sits in a perspective on a plateau of having changed things, of course awaiting the next challenge but being able to look back and see how and why she did what she had to do. It inspired me to share this story.

Once there was a man who had a dream about working in his chosen field. One that interested him and filled him with awe. He took advice from his elders and teachers and set out on an advised course that was not exactly what his heart desired. He tried and failed, almost quit numerous times, doubted and trudged on. Eventually he reached a triumph and his family were proud. He set about his work full of youthful enthusiasm and will. He worked and volunteered and studied more. After a period of time he realised his work was not all that he had hope for. There were flashes and instances of joy and satisfaction but overall it was uninspiring to him and his heart was always a little heavy.

He looked around for solutions but could find nothing to ease his soul. Everyone around him was seemingly doing the same drudgery, some were complaining daily and others complaining with their bodies and actions but not their words. Occasionally he found someone different. Someone who was just happy, smiling and helpful.

He looked for another avenue but it was always blocked off, even after much endeavour. Then he found he had commitments so he needed to earn the wage and he forgot about a way out. His heart heavy and sometimes feeling broken, he carried on.

One day he made a decision to change things again. Looking back over his life he could see that time was running out and so he set out on a course of action to do what he had wanted to do all along. He undid many things, cried as he did so, dismayed many people close to him and it broke his heart even more. He did not know if what he was doing was right or not but he had made changes and there was no going back.

He thought that this and that would happen. It did not and life seemed very difficult. Emotionally there was much pain, even more than before when he sought to get away from what he thought was the root of it. How could he have been so crazy? There was however, no going back. The onward march was the only option apart from the days when he just had to sit.

When his strength reappeared, he began to work tirelessly again. This was his strength, he could work, often too much, but he could really work. This he did. It involved many long journeys, much patience, frustration beyond imaginings and more dark nights. He continued to give up that and those which did not fit with his goal. He moved on but the feelings and the vista did not really change much. Just different faces, different places.

Through it all one thing remained a constant in the winds of adversity and comment; the flickering yet inextinguishable flame within him. One day he received a message. At first the message seemed just another opportunity for different faces and different places so he held back. The other person was persistent. One conversation led to another. He just said yes and yes and yes to the requirements. He was scared and kept the conversation secret for the consequences of his decision would mean giving up his life as it was. Eventually when he had consolidated his thoughts and the relationship with it, he told those he loved. They smiled, cried, loved him and let him go with good wishes. The man set out and arrived in a land he did not know, with people he did not understand and a language he could not speak.

Everyday he chose to, he now got to do what he had desired to do for many decades. They fed, housed, transported and paid him to enable him to do his work. Thirty years of wilderness had come to an end. The duration of his wilderness experience made everything so much sweeter. Every drop he savoured and nothing was wasted. Every friendship was a blessing, every challenge faced and every experience relished. It was as near to bliss as he could imagine.

Listen to the story of the life of any great man or woman and there is an almost certain guarantee that there will be a wilderness. The greater the individual's achievement, possibly the more arduous the wilderness. Winston Churchill had years of depression, out of favour, despised and lost, yet unable to let go of being himself and what he believed. His time came and he was ready.

Ryan Holiday describes how Seneca and Epictetus the leaders of Rome were both exiled at points in their lives. Exiled, sent away, not wanted, hated and ridiculed. If anything of this nature is happening to you or it feels like it, take heart, there is a road back. Today's news is tomorrow's chip paper. Crucifixion is part of the process. The longer and harder it is, the greater the opportunity for growth and learning.

Nelson Mandela spent twenty seven years in captivity for his beliefs, much of it on Robben Island in solitary confinement. How dark must his night of the soul have been with only his inner flame to hold himself to? He and a few friends, beaten, brutalised and imprisoned away from the mainland, away from public gaze, out of mind and held by an 'in control state'. How could a day of victory and freedom be rationally envisioned to come about? No matter. We know what eventually happened.

I am certain I could easily find a thousand other examples and stories to illuminate. Let us, however, cut to the chase as they say. Are you celebrating your wilderness and following your bliss?

The Author

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