

Journey of a Wounded Healer

Brian Allan Skinner

24. A Blessed Life

22 August 2014

A former employer in New York City with whom I still stay in touch years after the last time he hired me, was first shocked by my informing him of my stroke. But he then became curious to learn every detail of the stroke and how I was being treated in the hospital. David has a sarcastic wit and we enjoyed many laughs on the phone at the expense of the nasty and stupid people who treat others despicably and then wonder why no one goes out of his way to help them.

I realized the source of David's curiosity: he was the family member who most directly dealt with the nurses and staff who took care of his mother in the nursing home where she spent the last few years of her life. She had dementia and was often less than kind to her care-givers. But my friend did all he could to make it up to them with profuse thanks and many small, but heartfelt gifts. As a result, his mother was very well cared for and she lived out her days comfortably and without the fear that bedevils so many demented patients. Her care-givers felt appreciated, even though it was not so much on the part of the patient.

My friend also wanted to know whether I had plans upon my returning home to visit the spot in the woods where I had so nearly met my end. I might have thought this an odd question except that David and I think along similar lines and the same strange notion had already occurred to me. I determined that I would like to revisit that spot on the very day I returned home or as soon thereafter as I could manage. I thought I would like to get down on my knees if it could be done safely and thank whatever God may be in my heart at the moment for my deliverance. Another friend suggested I return to the spot and shout at the top of my lungs, "I have survived!" But I thought that might seem arrogant or aggressive or hostile. That is not my feeling at all. Yes, I have survived, but it doesn't seem to me that I had very much to do with it. So, there was no need for me to be defiant about it, but only grateful.

Though my partner will be bringing me home on the day I return there, I am not so certain I want him to accompany me on my mission into the woods to visit the place of my moment of near-death, an experience that has so profoundly changed my life. It seems more appropriate that it be a solitary moment spent in quiet and reflection. Yet, at least for now, I don't think I could safely negotiate the uneven and stony ground.

I guess, when I am put to the test, I have difficulty addressing a personal God who answers individual prayers. My God cares for everyone, though I'd be hard-pressed to say exactly how that care is shown. I can easily pray for others, and I do, but it has been decades since I have petitioned God on my own behalf. As Jesus said, He knows what we need before we

ask for it, certainly better than I know what I need. I truly lack for nothing. My life has been continually blessed and I have no reason to suspect that will change. As I have learned in Alcoholics Anonymous, I pray only for knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out.

So I think when I return to the place where I almost died, my thoughts will be quiet ones and my prayers will be ones of gratitude for a life spared. I hope to carry out a purpose I do not yet even dimly perceive, but which I trust will be of benefit to all those I encounter during the rest of my days on earth. By God's grace I am ready for it.