

Comiskey at 60 (Isaiah and otherwise...)

'Arise and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and deep darkness the peoples of the earth but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you' (Isaiah 60:1, 2).

Does aging make you better or worse? Guess it depends on who you are looking at. As I turned 60 the other day, I'm more aware than ever of contradictions within me, the mix that alternately cheers and deadens.

How to live honestly yet hopefully? Stay fixed on Jesus: somehow, my 'cross-eyed' view apprehends glorious light and sheds it upon the soul's contours. Shadows flee and hope rises. Almighty mercy frees me to struggle in the Light. In that Light, I can behold the weak one next to me as an equally fit candidate for grace, one destined to wriggle out of frustration and into glory (Romans 8:18-21).

Last week, I reviewed my journals from 2017 and was struck by the year's difficulty. The gravitational pull of sin and death was evident. But more familiar than a spirit of heaviness were the upward risings that followed every rut in the path. All it took was a gentle act of the will. I offered the shame, disappointment, or fear to the Crucified, who never failed to surge like a crystal stream up the middle of a polluted ditch. I caught His wave through acts of prayerful surrender.

Of course we need reminders of new life. I recall one day last year when I couldn't summon faith. Giving was down, I had to buy an international air ticket, and the world seemed to be spinning fast, too fast, as if careening off its axis. I called my mother, just shy of her 92-year-old birthday, and offered her my lament. Keep in mind this woman lost her husband of 60 years a decade ago and has had to choose very day to rise and shine. That gets harder every year, as friends die off; she is now the 'last woman standing,' the one who cheerfully presides over the memorials of departed friends. She rises on shaky legs, refuses despair and self-pity, and looks to the One who shines upon her.

She heard my lament and responded: 'That sounds hard. But how great that you are free to launch out into the world and make a difference in people's lives through His glorious Kingdom!' I blushed a little and offered my burden to the Lord, who enabled me to straighten up quickly. I positioned myself afresh to reflect His rays. The Light shines in darkness, and cannot be overcome (JN 1:5).