

LEADING IN THE SHADOW: ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT LAST – PART 2

In our last blog (Part 1 of Leading in the Shadow), we ended with the poem, The Hollow Men, by T.S. Eliot, beginning with the fifth movement. Here we go around the prickly pear, Prickly pear prickly pear, Here we go around the prickly pear, At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea, And the reality. *Between the motion, And the act, Falls the Shadow*

"For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception, And the creation, Between the emotion, And the response, Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire And the spasm

Between the potency, And the existence, Between the essence, And the descent, Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is, Life is, For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends – This is the way the world ends – This is the way the world ends – Not with a bang but a whimper.

IN THESE PROVOCATIVE AND SOBERING STANZAS, ELIOT REMINDS US THAT LIFE IS INHERENTLY DIFFICULT BECAUSE THE ONLY SURE THING THIS SIDE OF THE FALL IS THE SHADOW.

The Shadow represents all that stands against fulfillment, against Shalom, wholeness, health, and completion. The Shadow is the gap, the distance, the separation between vision and reality, aspiration and transformation, intention and action, readiness and result. Eliot reminds us that this fallen world, if left to run its normal course, ends in a whimper not a bang. East of Eden the Shadow prevails.

IT IS OF NOTE THAT ELIOT'S SHADOW STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE CONCEPT OF "MANIFEST DESTINY." THIS IS THE RATHER WIDESPREAD BUT NONETHELESS UNFOUNDED IDEA THAT THE CARD DECK OF LIFE IS STACKED IN FAVOR OF THOSE WITH GOOD INTENTIONS, AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY OUR WELFARE AND PROGRESS IS INEVITABLE.

This grand illusion is operative in the assumptive framework of most moderns and I might add many post-moderns. The illusion of progress tempts us to believe that just because we think something ought to happen that it eventually will happen. That our cause is "on the right side of history," that the Red Sea will politely part for us, making our way obvious and easy; that organizations, communities and nations are moved ahead by the momentum of a benign, "hidden hand" which is at work to serve our highest ideals. So, how do followers of Jesus react to the Shadow and the idea of manifest destiny?

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE NEITHER DESPAIRING IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY NOR PRESUMPTUOUS IN SUCCESS.

Without despairing, we nonetheless take sober note of the brute difficulty of life and the relative rarity of making a substantive and lasting difference this side of the fall, even for those destined for heaven. Grace doesn't mean ease of accomplishment—read the book of Joshua. Rather, it sets in motion and sustains diligent human effort in the face of delay, discouragement and disappointment—read the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul.

And without presuming, followers of Jesus take joyful note of the fact that Jesus is in charge of history and will one Great Day sum up all things by His glorious plan to redeem and renew the world; that God will surprise us along the way with open doors, times of supernatural blessing and favorable winds.

SO, HOW DOES A LEADER BLEND THE IDEAS OF HOPE AND HUMILITY, THE EXCEEDING DIFFICULTY OF GETTING ANYTHING DONE, WITH THE MAGNIFICENT PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO EXPAND HIS KINGDOM AROUND THE GLOBE?

How does a leader operate in the gap between the vision cast and a stubborn world resistant to change? Join us in our final blog on Leading in the Shadow to see.

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