

I've been profoundly moved and thoughtful over the last few weeks, and here's three reasons why:

A Reunion
A Procession
A Letter

Let me explain. The Reunion was of many friends gathering at a funeral. All of us were joined in celebrating an amazing life of a dear mutual friend. Some of us have not met for over 20 years. Some of us didn't recognise each other, as nearly quarter of a century has reshaped us, changed our hair colour, given us interesting lived-in faces. It was, in fact, a deeply respectful and in many ways joyous occasion. A life fulfilled - what more can I say? Afterwards, many of us expressed how powerfully we had recognised the bond between friends, the importance of connections, family, friendship.

The Procession I saw from my car on my way to a meeting out of town. I could see the queues of cars (thankfully on the other side of the road). Usually that's due to a tractor being obstinate. On this occasion, it was a hearse on its way to the Crematorium. A couple of cars behind the procession were clearly family. But what about at the back of the queue of cars? Did the drivers and passengers know that a life had passed, touching other lives? Probably they felt impatient, wondered what was holding up the traffic. When things don't go our way, we complain, that it has rained, that the bus is late, that fish is expensive, that our flight is cancelled, that there's a lot of traffic on the road today. We don't always see the big picture, don't know about the impact of events on others' lives, or all the threads that connect us, the things we hold in common as human beings.

The Letter was from my mother, in England, to my father who was serving as a Colonial Officer in West Africa. Actually it was two letters, one written the day before my birth full of worries about her caesarian. She didn't think she would survive; and she entreated him never to reproach himself if the worst happened, as she had wanted a child (me) so much. The other was written the day of my birth, full of wonder and delight and joy.

What a wonderful thing to inherit! In fact I have two bags of correspondence that my parents wrote each other between the ages of 16 and 41. It is an extraordinary story. I feel very privileged to read this private and touching story of two human beings who worried, cared, loved, strove, laughed, cried and did their best. What a testimony to the human spirit! And I wonder what our children will inherit? The password to our Facebook account? A mobile with a few texts on it? Makes you think!

So it's been a very reflective and humbling March-April, rich in human spirit.

I'm concluding with a fabulous story, from storyteller Donna Jacobs Sife.

The Most Important Story

Once, the great Hassidic leader, Zusia, came to his followers. His eyes were red with tears, and his face was pale with fear.

"Zusia, what's the matter? You look frightened!"

"The other day, I had a vision. In it, I learned the question that the angels will ask me when I stand at the Gates of Heaven."

The followers were puzzled. "Zusia, you are pious. You are scholarly and humble. You have helped so many of us. What question about your life could be so terrifying that you would be frightened to answer it?"

Zusia turned his gaze to heaven. "I have learned that the angels will not ask me, 'Why weren't you a Moses, leading your people out of slavery?'"

His followers persisted. "So, what will they ask you?"

"And I have learned," Zusia sighed, "that the angels will not ask me, 'Why weren't you a Joshua, leading your people into the promised land?'"

One of his followers approached Zusia and placed his hands on Zusia's shoulders. Looking him in the eyes, the follower demanded, "But what will they ask you?"

"They will say to me, 'Zusia, there was only one thing that no power of heaven or earth could have prevented you from becoming.' They will say, 'Zusia, why weren't you Zusia?'"

That's it for now. Carpe Diem!