

Week 57 – Saturday 28th July



To be a pilgrim

Some of you may remember walking under a banner of a shell as part of MAYC – the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs. Or you may find your Church has a shell picture somewhere on a poster or banner and you take it for granted that it is part of our tradition.

I love shells. Living by the beach is a delight, for I can go and pick one up and bring it home and put it with the many others I have collected over the years. Shells are amazingly tough yet they look quite fragile. I also use a shell for baptism, to pour the water over the head of those being baptised.

The scallop shell is an emblem of St. James (of the James-and-John duo, the 'Sons of Thunder' as Jesus called them), and it has become a symbol of the journey we make in life, both physical and spiritual. James began life as a fisherman in Galilee, and he left that profession to be a disciple of Jesus. He was a faithful Apostle (one who has seen the risen Jesus and preached the Good News) and was martyred by Herod Agrippa around AD44. He is the patron saint of Spain and of pilgrims, and is associated with a very famous pilgrimage site, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which houses the shrine to him.

The symbol of the shell became an early sign of someone on a pilgrimage; it was in effect their passport, and those who saw it knew that this person was on a personal journey of faith.

All of us are on different stages of our life journey. Sometimes we will be on our own, other times we will walk alongside folk for a while; we may go ahead or lag behind, meeting others on the journey of faith as a consequence. There will be times when we feel close to God and other times when we feel very far away. We may also go on a physical journey to a special place, and that is a spiritual experience too. St James had highs and lows in his life. He was one of the inner three who witnessed the Transfiguration and who also wanted to sit at the right hand of Jesus in his kingdom. How relieved he must have felt looking at the three crosses and knowing he had asked Jesus to put him there, but Jesus had refused!

God calls us today to be a pilgrim people, searching for his light and truth, following where he calls us to be. The trouble is we can be very comfortable in our churches and not want to leave the safety of them to step out and follow the one who said "I am the Way". For James, following Christ meant that he was martyred, and his is the only death to be recorded in the New Testament of all the Apostles.

But the scallop shell reminds us of our walk with God. The shell has many grooved lines that lead from the outer rim to a meeting point at the base – so when pilgrims carry a scallop shell it represents a personal journey as we travel both physically and spiritually towards God.

**Jesus, be the centre, be my source, be my light, Jesus.
Jesus, be the centre, be my hope, be my song, Jesus.
*Be the fire in my heart, be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live, Jesus, Jesus.***

**Jesus, be my vision, be my path, be my guide, Jesus.
*Be the fire in my heart, be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live, Jesus, Jesus.***

Jesus, be the centre, be my source, be my light, Jesus.

Michael Frye

Words and Music: © 1999 Vineyard Songs UK

Administered by Song Solutions CopyCare, 14 Horsted Square, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1QG

Singing the Faith 447 Used with permission