

July 4, 2012

Dear Friends,

God Moves in Mysterious Ways

Today is Independence Day. On this day in history, eleven years before in 1765, the most popular poet and hymnist in England wrote a letter to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, which included the inspiring words:

“How naturally does affliction make us Christians and how impossible it is when all human help is vain, and the whole earth too poor and trifling to furnish us with one moment’s peace, how impossible is it then to avoid looking at the Gospel!”

At this time in his life, William Cooper (1731 – 1800) was thirty-four years old. He went through quite a religious transformation in his life. He was born in the rectory of St. Peter’s Church in Hertfordshire, England where his father, John Cooper, was serving as pastor. He grew up as a fervent evangelical Christian who feared that he would be doomed to the fires of Hell. It was his association later in life with the famous John Newton, who wrote the words to the hymn, *Amazing Grace* that gave him the opportunity to see past this to God’s love and mercy.

His life was full of affliction, not because God was punishing him, but because life was hard for everyone. In 1763, at the age of thirty-two, he suffered a nervous breakdown and was confined to an asylum where he tried to commit suicide three times. Those words of his above were an expression of his knowledge that all our troubles can only bring us closer to God who is the source of tremendous mercy, love and peace. William Cooper’s poem, *Light Shinning out of Darkness*, gave the English language the well-loved idiom, “God moves in mysterious ways.”

According to Dale Carnegie, the famous Mayo brothers declared that half the patients occupying hospital beds were there because of nervous troubles (*How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, p. 23). Without knowing all the answers, he suggested that even insanity might be caused by all the worries and anxieties that we suffer from today. In *Man against Himself*, Dr. Menninger wrote that we can “destroy our bodies and minds by anxiety, frustration, hatred, resentment, rebellion and fear” (p. 24).

Dale Carnegie wrote that there are two eternities in life which we can do nothing about. The first is the eternity of yesterday which can never be repeated. The second is the eternity of tomorrow which hasn’t arrived. Today is all we have. Mother Theresa of Calcutta would say the same thing: “Yesterday is gone and will never return. Tomorrow hasn’t arrived. All we have is today.” This wisdom was expressed by Jesus himself who taught us not to worry about tomorrow: “Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil” (Matthew 6:34).