

Bridge Over Troubled water

By John Rawson

Way back in the 1960's I first heard and learned to love the music of Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. I love their harmony, their rhythm, and the words of the songs they wrote and sang together. Then in 1970, they released the song, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. For me, it was "love at first hearing!!!" Like their earlier songs, I love the tune, the way the song is sung, but I especially love the words.

I didn't know then, and I don't know now, if it was written as a Gospel Song, or whether they had some other reason for writing it, but I did know then, that one day I would need to use it as a theme for worship. It's only taken 51 years to get there!!!

Let's just look at just the first verse:

*When you're weary,
Feeling small
When tears are in your eyes,
I'll dry them all
I'm on your side,
Oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found,
Like a bridge over troubled water,
I will lay me down.*

Songwriter: Paul Simon Bridge Over Troubled Water lyrics © Paul Simon Music

Many will know the story of Sir Walter Raleigh, reportedly throwing his cloak down on a wet road so that his Queen Elizabeth would not get her shoes muddy or feet wet! Well, this song goes beyond that, as it promises one's body will be laid down, one's life will be given for another.

Whenever I think of those words, my mind immediately turns to Jesus' words of counsel in the 11th Chapter of Matthew:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. NRSV

Let's look at those words again, this time from the New Century Version of the Bible:

Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light.

And I think too of more recent counsel from D & C 163:

Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

*When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all
I'm on your side, Oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found,
Like a bridge over troubled water,
I will lay me down.*

For me, this song is a song about being a healing presence. It's about reaching out to another who has need. It's about bringing God's love, Jesus' love, into another's life who at that moment is crying for help. It's about being vulnerable to Divine grace! It's about being ready, as a healing presence, to lay down your life for another, just as Jesus gave his life, laying it down for us, just like a bridge over troubled waters.

So we turn our thoughts to what that means for us as disciples of our God, who loves us immeasurably.

The mother of James and John is said to have asked Jesus for a prominent position for her sons. Jesus' response whoever wishes to be great among you, must be your servant.

What do we do in servant ministry? When have we been blessed by someone reaching out to us for healing? When have we touched another in their need? When have we been the blessing that person needed at that moment?

The theme of God's blessing through healing presence runs through Scripture. For me, no more so than Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city: it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.*

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

The Psalm sings about God's love reaching out to us, touching our lives when we are most vulnerable; when we are confronted with confusion and tumult and danger. In giving ourselves to God, we find peace and comfort and blessing. God is our bridge over troubled waters and, if we link this Psalm 46 to Psalm 23 and Micah 4, we can lay down in green pastures, at peace with ourselves, and at peace with our world. And all can sit under their own vine and fig tree and not be afraid.

It's this peace that Jesus, the peaceable one, brings to our lives that brings healing. In reaching out in love in response to Christ's love, we become, not only a bridge over troubled waters, but people whose lives reflect the Christ, and we become blessed to be a blessing. A healing presence!

When I reflect on the words of this song in the shadow of my life's journey and in the light those many wonderful divine experiences where I have responded to the call to be a healing presence in the lives of others, it encourages me to be vulnerable to God's divine grace. As I engage with modern day scriptures, to lift my eyes beyond the horizon, to focus my love on the welfare of all and trust in this great and marvellous work, I pray that I may find myself as that bridge over troubled waters, as a friend to those who need God's presence in their lives.

Being a healing presence makes me a servant minister. It makes me a bridge over troubled waters.

John lives on the NSW Mid North Coast
He is an Evangelist in Community of Christ



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