

Camno Contemplations (A Message from Pastor Dave W8



This last week I began my final stretch from a town called Sarria within the beautiful green landscape of Galicia; Santiago was just over 115 km away. The atmosphere was different though. Sarria is the closest town to Santiago from which an individual can officially complete the Camino de Santiago. Suddenly the paths were crowded, almost like being on a busy high street; the pilgrim community had changed. The opportunity for solitude was gone, communication differed and the route was far more commercialised. A few of the self-described 'proper pilgrims' were none too pleased. Their sentiment was summarised by some graffiti on a wayside pillar (see pic).



). I initially struggled with the changes until I considered the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20: 1-16). Here Jesus tells of labourers who are employed at different times in the day, so some work less, but all are paid the same wage. Those who worked the whole day complained about the 'unfair' nature of their master's generosity. The parable though, is all about God's grace and what He does for us; it is not about what we do for Him to justify ourselves and earn His generosity. I talked this through with a few of the pilgrim's I have known from the start; it transformed our view and blessed our relationships with all the pilgrims whatever distance they were walking.

I wandered to the main tourist offices by the Cathedral to apply for my certificate. At the start of the journey a pilgrim buys a 'Camino Credential.' Each day the pilgrim then collects stamps from where they have walked. The Credential is proof that the Camino has been completed and that the pilgrim is entitled to their Certificate.

There were huge queues and quite an atmosphere in the offices (see pic). As I watched and listened it became clear that the process was not without acrimony and occasional conflict. Some people weren't entitled to certificates;

they had not met the requirements. I looked at my certificate which was in French; I was unable to translate the guidance. I hadn't bothered to ring Hannah for her to explain it to me, assuming I knew what I was doing, but I began to wonder about my eligibility? I'd completed the walk but was I entitled to a Certificate? I couldn't help but think of the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25: 31-46). We all live a life. God gives us His grace, love and direction; but do we follow His guidance, do we receive His grace....do we know and live for Him? When we come to that day of accounting will we be welcomed in or turned away? God is a God of Grace AND Justice. He explains His Way in His Word through His Holy Spirit and Church. Are we living in His Way, are we explaining His Way to others?

This is my last Contemplation. My motivation in completing the walk was not its destination but to seek God (Jer. 29:12-13), to take Sabbath Rest (Hebs. 4) and to deepen my relationship with the Lord (Phil. 3: 1-14). I am filled, not with a sense of accomplishment for the walk itself, but with an overwhelming sense of joy in knowing God and of the privilege we have in giving Him glory. Whatever 'way' our lives take may we live in the joy and presence of His Way.

No Bon Camino this time but wonderfully see you soon.
P.S. My thanks to all who have supported this venture and all who have worked in my absence; it is very much appreciated
P.P.S. I did get my Certificate!

