

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Through all changing scenes of life

### Reflections from Peter Ballard as he prepares to retire ...

*Through all the changing scenes of life,  
In trouble and in joy.  
The praises of our God shall still  
my heart and tongue employ.*

This seventeenth century hymn says much about our journey through life. This hymn like many others we rarely hear, was sung week in week out in the parish churches of the land for almost 200 years. Whilst it did make the cut and was included by Horrobin and Leavers in Mission Praise I suspect it is for many simply 'old fashioned'.

When I was singing that hymn as boy in church and school, I had no idea how the world and the church would change in my lifetime or how I would be changed.

At the same time that Brady and Tate were writing this hymn, the mathematician Jacob Bernoulli was writing about spirals which never ended. He wrote: "Because our wonderful curve through all its changes remains constantly the same, it can be regarded as the symbol of fortitude and constancy in adversity: or even of the resurrection of our flesh after various changes and at length after death itself. Indeed, I would order this spiral to be inscribed on my tomb with the epitaph 'Eadem mutata resurgo' ... the same, though changed, I rise again.

Through life we all change but God remains constant and walks with us through the good times and the bad. It is through life's experiences that we are changed but it is our faith and the constancy of God in our lives that allows us, no matter how far we fall, to rise again.

Forty-nine years ago this month I went to Bede College Durham, my alma mater, to read Mathematics. Its motto was Bernoulli's epitaph. The Saint after whom it was named after, The Venerable Bede, wrote: "Heaven is not the place we go to when life is ended; it is the place we go to so that new life can begin. The evening of this world is followed by morning in the next."

We all at times move on from the evening of one's current life to the morning of whatever life will be. Sometimes that is not easy and naturally fills us with dread, but we can do so knowing that, 'through all the changing scenes of life', God will be with us.

As I retire, it seems fitting I should let the Venerable Bede have the last word. He wrote, in his Commentary on the Revelation of St John: "Christ is that Morning Star which, when the night of this age is past, brings to his saints the promised light of life and opens everlasting Day."

**Peter Ballard, until very recently CEO of DBE Services. Also, a former Archdeacon of Lancaster. Remaining in the best role in the world: a parish priest at St James Shireshead.**

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