

'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What are we to have then?'

Said by Peter in the context of Jesus's reply to the rich young man asking him *'what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?'*

It's the perennial conflict between what we do for God and what God does for us in exchange, as if we have entered into some sort of market where deals are made- what's in this transaction for me?- as if God and humankind are equal partners. But no, for us any such deal is impossible, it's only possible for God. One is reminded of Paul's injunction *'If our hope has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable'*. What makes a saint isn't faith in this world, or the next, but faith in God - full stop - (I Cor 15.19) or 'period', as the Americans say. So what is the nature of this faith?

'You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator.' (Col 3:10-11)

– from the passage immediately preceding the one we've just heard in Paul's letter to the Colossians. And the image of its Creator is most clearly seen in Christ.: Christ is the impossibility of God's demand on us made possible, the narrow gate through which even a camel may enter, or even a rich man prepared to let go of his faith in this world only. The saints we celebrate today are those we recognise as having allowed themselves to be remade in the image of Christ, not to be removed from this world but to live in it as Christ did, to live as if Christ is Lord now. So every future hope is collapsed into now, into the present moment, into how we are with one another now. It's a work in process, a crucible. What must I do to inherit eternal life becomes life lived now in Christ.

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