

Friends

I recently came across a Victorian poem about an old, battered violin for sale at an auction house. The auctioneer starts the bidding at £1 and is about to declare the instrument sold at £3, when suddenly an old man in the back shuffles forward, picks it up and plays a short, simple melody. “Well now,” says the auctioneer, “Shall we start the bidding at £1,000?” The violin sells for £3,000. Some people wonder why it has suddenly become so much more valuable and the poem goes on to say:

“And many a man with life out of tune
And battered and scarred with sin
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd
Much like the old violin...
But the master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul, and the change that is wrought
By the touch of the Master’s hand.”

Written by American poet Myra Brooks Welch (1877 – 1959), and made into a film in 1980, like many Victorian poems it feels a little trite and yet there is something there. I have so many conversations with people about why they believe they don’t need to go to church or pray regularly or read their Bibles. They are, they tell me, good people, who never do nasty things, who serve their community and are kind. If there is a heaven, they are sure that God will let them in.

It seems to me so sad that this is what they think faith is, a kind of insurance policy in case eternity is real. Relationship with God through Jesus Christ, our prayer lives, our fellowship with other Christians, these things are not about what happens next, but what happens now: the change that is wrought in us by the touch of the Master’s hand. May you know that touch this week.

God bless, Vicci