



REFLECTIONS

September 9, 2012

**You are the light of the world. A city on a hill
cannot be hidden.**

Matthew 5:14

Lesson from *Ulysses*

One of the lessons taught only by time is that lessons come at unexpected times and in unexpected ways. College English class was a place I expected to learn, but I didn't expect a life lesson from it especially one that would shape my life.

In those formative years, poetry was not a favorite study. I was interested in adding information to my intellect but insights into the emotions of people or the meaning of life held little appeal. So it surprised me when an insightful thought from a classic poem jumped off the page. It embedded itself deeply in my soul and became a compass that has directed the way I hope to live—a foundational piece of who I am.

Obscurely placed in the midst of an Alfred, Lord Tennyson poem, the simple sentence reads, "*I am a part of all that I have met.*" It sounds so innocent, but those few words from *Ulysses* led me to retrace the steps of my life, the people I have known, the places I have been, and the episodes I have lived. Together those people, places, and stories lived have molded the essence of my being. But the lesson from *Ulysses* teaches that I was a part of the people I have known, the places I have been, and the stories I have lived. The thought was profound.

Years have now passed since that classroom lesson from *Ulysses*, but the truth of it weighs heavy still today. God's hand is ever present in our world and in our lives. He was speaking to me when that poetic thought resonated into my soul. God's hand was at work in my life through the people I have met along the journey. He was at work in the places I have been, and in the episodes I have lived. And however large or small my role has been to those people, places, or events, my life is forever a stitch in the tapestry of them all. I ask forgiveness for the stains I may have left in people's lives when I could have brought them joy; for the damage I may have caused in the places I have tread when I could have left it better, and for the darkness I may have carried into the stories I played when I could have added light.

And one last lesson from *Ulysses*. "I am a part of all that I have met," explains the importance of Jesus words when He said,

You are the light of the world,
Richard +

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