A Prayerful Run

During first few steps of most of my runs from home I make a left turn toward the river, and there is a doctor’s business message board that I almost always notice. The message changes often, and for now it announces, “Acupuncture is great for migraines.”

When I notice the sign, it alerts me to be prayerful. So on my last run, I gave a treatment for myself to know that God’s man could never be deprived of clear thinking. Many times, the sign jumpstarts my prayers, serving as a reminder that running is an opportunity to pray for myself and the world. As I continue down the hill I am filled with happiness that I get to be outside blessing myself and others as I run and pray.

There is plenty of God’s reflection to notice. As cars zip by I think about divine Mind providing the intelligence to engineer a complex machine, and of all the workers that put it together. I think about how everyone in each car has a divine purpose, like going to a job or home provided by divine Love. Some are going to the grocery store to acquire Love’s provisions or to a park to express joy for natural and artistic beauty.

As I turn on a path adjacent to the river, I give gratitude for the intelligence reflected in man to invent and improve concrete for many purposes including this multifunctional path. As I continue along the river, someone is walking their joy-filled dog, and I see God’s creature “moving in the harmony of Science.” ("Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," 514: 29) I see a bird sitting on a branch and a squirrel running up the trunk and think about how each tree is divinely placed to provide food and shelter for God’s creatures. And in a few weeks, there will be shade along this path just as the temperatures get hotter. A little later a family is walking toward me, and their child waves to me and shouts, “Hi!” This fills both the family and me with joy and, of course, I respond.

I turn onto a dirt path into a park with several ponds, and see people out enjoying the beautiful weather. I see geese watching over nests on an island and ducks landing on another pond. Soon the goslings and the ducklings will hatch. It is so easy to see Life “reflected in existence” in this park. (S&H 516: 9-10)

Filling up with gratitude for all the joy and life I see expressed leaves no room for worries or frustrations that seem to build up during my day.

While I am grateful that many of my runs are freeing like this, not every run is so spiritually clear. "The Manual of the Mother Church" outlines a duty for Christian Scientists. A church member, it says, should “not be made to forget nor to neglect his duty to God, to his Leader, and to mankind.” (42: 7-8) Admittedly, I sometimes fail at this. I normally view praying for the world and seeing God’s reflection while running as part of fulfilling this important duty. However, sometimes I am focused on frustrations and other selfish thoughts (aggressive mental suggestion). It’s like running with a backpack, and isn’t nearly as enjoyable.

Fortunately, at some point in the run, I usually recognize the mesmerism and realize that if I am running by all these people and animals, with problems in my own thought, I am not blessing them or myself. What good can I share? I begin to smile as I notice God’s perfect man. It’s always nice running by people that are smiling, and I know that I, too, can share this simple act of kindness.

While most of my runs are classified as easy runs, every few days I try a challenging run. On these runs I don’t notice as much what’s going on around me. I focus on being sharp and striving to not let matter dictate the terms of my being. This too has blessings. Cyclists sometimes cheer for me. I’ve had people reach out to high-five me (not lately though). Between challenging repeats, I’ll walk, and people that observed me running stop to chat and share their running stories. Birders pointed out birds, and I’ve stopped to observe birds, elk, and other animals and pointed them out to others. When I take my dog out for runs, she blesses me and others – bringing smiles to peoples’ faces and even once saved someone’s life by leading me in a direction I didn’t want to go one night during freezing weather. That is a story for another time, though.

Ultimately, running is about blessing myself and others. Even in this time of social distancing, it continues to be so for me and my community.