

There was a time when I thought the song, Auld Lang Syne, was over-used, tired, worn-out, from another century. I had heard it sung on New Year's Eve too many times; Do you remember Guy Lombardo's band playing it and Times Square in the background?

Maybe I didn't understand the words. It sounded to me like a drinking song.

*And surely you'll buy your pint cup!  
and surely I'll buy mine!  
And we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.*

Auld lang syne, Scottish for, "long long ago" or "days gone by." Loosely translated, '*For auld lang syne*' means '*for (the sake of) old times.*' It comes from a poem attributed to Robert Burns of Scotland, in 1788. But Burns had only written down the first pieces of this *old song* after hearing it from an old man. Burns then expanded upon the theme in his poem. Others had also collected parts of the *old song*. It is a good theme for New Year's Eve, '*for (the sake of) old times.*'

It is traditional for many English-speaking countries to sing this song at New Year's Eve; to bid farewell to the year while remembering the past and dear friendships, old acquaintances, "Should old acquaintances be forgot and never brought to mind?" Surely not! Don't forget your family and friends! Remember them lovingly! Is that the essence of this old song?

The Bible reminds us not to forget God. In Psalm 63:6, the psalmist writes, "On my bed I *remember* you; I think of you through the watches of the night." I

wonder if it is easier for us to remember our family and friends at the end of the year, but forget all that God has done for us. When we're caught in not remembering God, we have those 'aha' moments where we are surprised by the thought, 'O yes God, I remember you, too!' I remember you, too!

Psalm 119:93, says, "I will never *forget* your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life." The author vividly recalls God in their life, never forgetting what God has done for them.

As we come to the end of the year all of us have different things we're thinking about – what we've been through – what we hope for next year – what good things happened – putting the not-so-good things behind us. Auld Lang Syne isn't sung only at New Year's Eve celebrations, but also at other "endings/new beginnings" in life. And isn't that the common denominator with us humans, to remember the important stages in our lives, celebrating them, as we do each New Year. And as humans we tend to focus on relationships, those with our families, and those with our friends and hopefully our relationship with God.

Alan Jones writes, "...our relationship with God is of primary and fundamental importance. Without a sense of connection with God, all other relationships are impoverished." I believe we understand that and agree it's a truth to live by – we understand that here in our minds – but in our hearts, is God primary?

Of secondary importance is our relationships to one another, but which are bound together in our relationship with God and the whole created order. If *God is friendship*, as Aelred of Rievaulx put it simply, then all our relationships carry within them the possibility of an ever-deepening intimacy in God.

We don't think of relationships like that; at least I haven't. But in our relationships with others, we and they, have the possibility of deepening our relationship with God. Now that's a powerful message all by itself, whatever time of the year.

Alan Jones says that he found out *he mattered* through a Christian community that came around him and supported him at an early age. It is in relationships where we find out that we matter, to others, to God. And I suppose there is nothing that gives us greater encouragement and hope than to realize that we matter. Thus we need the friendship, the companionship and company along the varied journeys we make in life.

Auld Lang Syne is a song that reminds us that we matter because others have mattered in our lives and because they matter to us..., we matter!

“We two have run about the slopes,  
and picked the daisies fine;  
But we've wandered many a weary foot,  
since auld lang syne.  
We two have paddled in the stream,  
from morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us broad have roared  
since auld lang syne.”

Images..., stories..., of times with loved ones long ago. We all have images of friendships to remember and not forget. I believe that's what is so important at the end of the year. Remembering our stories... remembering our friendships...remembering we matter... remembering our God and his love for us.

Lucy Shaw's poem, *Wrong Turn*, puts it like this:

I took a wrong turn the other day.  
A mistake, but it led me to the shop where I found  
the very thing I'd been searching for.

With my brother I opened a packet  
of old letters from my mother and saw a side of her  
that sweetened what had been deeply sour.

Later that day the radio sang a song from  
a time when I was discovering love,  
and folded me into itself again.

From Luke 22:19, we hear these words, "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in *remembrance* of me."

"And there's a hand my trusty friend!  
And give us a hand o' *thine!*  
And we'll take a right good-will draught,  
for auld lang syne.

Robert Burns didn't forget God in this poem. "And give us a hand o'thine! Let us not forget God as we close out 2014 and come into the New Year. Amen