

God is already here

Stephen reminded us last week of the importance of quietening our spirits and turning within and finding God there. Martin Laird, in his book on contemplative prayer, *Oceans of Light* (p.53-54), poses the question why we feel we have to invite God if he is 'already the ground of our seeking'. He goes on to say that 'God is the great invitation – an invitation to release perpetually into that Love which finds Sabbath rest in us and sustains us in being.' So often, he says, it is as if 'we drive around town in the very car we think we have lost and want to find.'

As human beings our tendency is to believe we are, or at least need to be self-sufficient. It has struck me again recently how frequently we can forget that God is consistently within us and surrounding us with his love. We can so easily find ourselves once again pursuing a variety of ways that we think will bring God closer to us, whether it be praying in a particular kind of way, or engaging in certain activities, and sometimes we may simply become so absorbed or overwhelmed in the details or demands of our lives, that God seems very much on the periphery. So, as a result, we imagine we have to put in a great deal of effort to find our way back to God. It is as if on the spiritual journey we are always looking for the next foothold, when in fact God is already the foothold that is supporting us. There must come a point when we recognise that our endless searching must come to an end, and that the treasure, the Presence we are looking for, is already here, and found not in some great museum of elaborate artefacts, but within the very centre of our being, right in the heart of our very simple, ordinary lives. The Presence we search for is already here – I am in God and God is in me. This is a simple statement of truth, but one we so easily fail to comprehend. I know how personally I slip back into imagining it depends on my own efforts, and that I am not always living in the reality that R. S. Thomas expresses in his poem *Evening* –

'Love is
a moment eternally flowing'

John of the Cross has it so right when he emphasises how faith is when we harness our minds to become wholly and totally receptive and open to receive the impress of God. In his book about John of the Cross, *Seasons of Prayer*, Iain Matthew tells us that for him, Christ is 'all sufficient and all accessible. No other light is relevant outside of Him...Christ is sufficient because he reaches all of us, the whole of us.' p.56

So as we come to stilling prayer it is not a question of how good we are at it. It is not another technique to bring God closer to us. God is here with us and it is simply enough that we turn up. Let us come to rest, trusting that God is with us, receiving us, no matter how we are feeling in body, mind or spirit. God holds us in his attentive love and we can trust that he is ministering to us deep within our being. We have to become like little children acknowledging our utter helplessness and dependence on him.

Leading into silence

I loved the way
you stopped believing
you could ever
hold it all,
how you began
to let yourself
become the one
that's being held.

Temple, Rosemary Wahtola Trommer, from *All the Honey*

Leading from the silence

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20