

## Words of Encouragement Dec 2nd 2015

**Seven times a day, as I work on this hungry farm,** I say to You, *'Lord, why am I here? What is there here to stir my gifts to growth? What thing can I do for others - I who am captive to this dreary toil?'* And seven times a day You answer, *'I cannot do without you. Once did My Son live your life, and by His faithfulness did show My mind, My kindness, and My truth to men, women and children. But now He is come to My side, and you must take His place.'* From Hebridean Alters

---

*'The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he (God) has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.'* Deuteronomy 29:29

**A LIMITED VISION** While there are many things we can know about God because these are talked about in Holy Scripture, there is so much that remains unknown to us. We, therefore, need to be aware that what we so confidently assert about God may be more a reflection of ourselves and our values.

An early Christian known as Anselm, in faith and reflection sought to understand not only the ways of God - that is, God's action among us - but also the very *being* of God. He wrestled, for example, with the question of how God can both punish us for our wrongdoing and be merciful towards us in our sinning. He finally came to this insight, *'I only saw You in a certain degree and not as You are.'*

There is a tension between what God reveals and what remains hidden in the wisdom of God. In addition, we struggle with grasping what is revealed. And all claims about the knowability of God's hiddenness should be met with deep concern. We may be treading where angels only tread, tremble and worship.

Does all this mean our God is the stranger God? To some extent the answer to this is, 'yes'. This should not surprise us. Who fully understands himself or herself, or a friend, or a spouse? But we can still be comfortable and assured that all is well, even when all is not known or understood. So much the more can this be the case with God.

**THOUGHT:** Relationships are always sustained by faith and trust, not only by knowability. Reading for the 21 July in Charles R. Ringma *Hear the Ancient Wisdom*. Cascade Books, Oregon ISBN 13:978-1-62032-772-2

---

**FATHOMLESS MYSTERY:** Philip Yancey admits to often feeling besieged as he prays. He sees in the news endless reports of poverty, injustice, human cruelty, and terrorism. He feels the distress of relatives and others who face illness, divorce, and money troubles. Personal pressures crowd in on him. Yet he keeps at prayer, trying to get his mind off himself and asking God to refresh and renew his soul. *'In prayer I ask for, and gradually gain, trust in God's love and justice and mercy and holiness, despite all that might call those traits into question.'*

How? Yancey writes about viewing prayer as asking a timeless God to act in our

time-bound lives - but also viewing prayer *'from the other side, as a way of entering into the rhythms of eternity and aligning myself with God's 'view from above,' a way to harmonise my own desires with God's and then to help effect, while on earth, what God has willed for all eternity.'*

In this broken, often merciless world, Yancey thinks of Mother Teresa's nuns kneeling before dawn, asking for the strength to help the dying in Calcutta. He thinks of hospice workers, chaplains, pastors and others with massive challenges. And he thinks of Jesus *'facing the darkest day in human history, pausing to pray the longest prayer recorded in the Gospels.'*

What happens when we kneel to pray goes far beyond our understanding. As we pray, we're joined in fathomless mysteries with our Creator and Redeemer. We are connected with God's will being done in both heaven and earth - something far more significant than we can see in this earthly dimension and far exceeding our lifetime.

*'Lord Jesus Christ, as I bring all things to you, I can identify with Philip Yancey's sense of being besieged by needs and tragedies. Draw me into your concerns and rhythms. Show me how to harmonise my desires with yours.'*

And never forget that no one, not even you, is ever not in the presence of God!!

*'Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.'* Matthew 6:9-10

Adapted by Bill A. from the reading for 21st July in 'Encouragement' by Harold Myra, Tyndale Publishing 2018, ISBN 978-1-4143-3428-8

---

**BY ITS VERY NATURE, LOVE MUST BE VOLUNTARY:** Jesus said: *'Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or merely my own.'* John 7:17. How can the sincere Christian fulfil the scriptural command to love God with all their heart and their neighbour as them self? Of all the emotions of which the soul is capable, love is by far the freest, the most unreasoning, the one least likely to spring up at the call of duty or obligation, and surely the one that will not come at the command of another.

No law has ever been passed that can compel one moral being to love another, for by the very nature of it love must be voluntary. No one can be coerced or frightened into loving anyone. Love just does not come that way!

***The love the Bible commands is not the love of feeling: it is the love of willing, the 'willing tendency' of the heart.*** God never intended that such a being as a human should be the plaything of their feelings. The emotional life is a proper and noble part of the total personality, but it is, by its very nature, of secondary importance to the actual living out of the Christian faith. Christian faith lies in the will, and so does righteousness. The only good that God recognises is a willed good; the only valid holiness is a willed holiness.

It should cheer us all up to realise that in the sight of God every person is what they 'will' to be. To meet the requirements of love toward God the soul needs only to love and the miracle begins to blossom like the budding of Aaron's rod (Hebrew's 9:4)! In a similar way it is the growth of new buds fed by new life in the tree outside my home

that causes the old leaves to fall, the new to displace the old. May we do everything in our ability to foster the growth of new spirit life within ourselves so the old will continue to fall away.

Adapted by Bill A. from the reading for 22 July in 'Renewed Day By Day' Compiled by G. B. Smith from 'The Divine Conquest' by A. W. Tozer, Christian Publications 1980 ISBN 0-87509-252-7

---

Anglican bishop, poet, and theologian Rowan Williams said: '**Our present ecological crisis, the biggest single practical threat to our human existence in the middle to long term, has, religious people would say, a great deal to do with our failure to think of the world as existing in relation to the mystery of God, not just as a huge warehouse of stuff to be used for our convenience (and personal profit!)**'.

*We praise you, O Lord, for the waters, the mountains and hills, the deserts and valleys, the wilderness spaces, the gardens and parks, and for all living creatures. Please forgive us when we have not been good caretakers of the earth. Please make us into people who practice resurrection by bringing dead things back to life and by making ugly things beautiful again. Amen*

---

**Yes or No:** Jesus said: 'Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't'. Your word is enough. To strengthen your promise with a vow shows that something is wrong.'

We men have a knack of saying too much, which complicates our communication - and our lives. We try to be more profound than we are capable of being. If you doubt this listen to men around you at work, socialising, in parliament! We set up systems that are more complex than we are able to manage. We create protocols so unnatural that they turn us into actors.

Life can be much simpler and more effective for us if we would only learn to honestly and concisely answer every question that comes our way. Start simplifying our lives today by making it our ambition to simply say 'yes' or 'no' when asked a question or requested to do something. *Please Lord Jesus, give me the grace to simply say what I have to say and to then to shut up!*

---

Are there others within your 'contact' zone who may find these words encouraging? One way to find out is to forward them on to others. God bless you. Bill