The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 9

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;
**Peace on each one who comes in joy.**
Peace on each one who offers prayers;
**Peace on each one who offers song.**
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
**Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.**

Opening Prayer

Praise to you, God, for all your work among us.
Yours is the vigor in creation,
yours is the impulse in our new discoveries.
Make us adventurous, yet reverent and hopeful
in all we do.
*Amen.*

The Gospel  
*Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30*

Jesus said to the crowd, “To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in
the marketplaces and calling to one another;

‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’
For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of
tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have
hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants;
yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my
Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except
the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you
rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and
you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**Poem:** Briefly It Enters, and Briefly Speaks  
*by Jane Kenyon*

I am the blossom pressed in a book,
found again after two hundred years. . . .

I am the maker, the lover, and the keeper....

When the young girl who starves
sits down to a table
she will sit beside me. . . .

I am food on the prisoner's plate. . . .

I am water rushing to the wellhead,
filling the pitcher until it spills. . . .

I am the patient gardener
of the dry and weedy garden. . . .

I am the stone step,
the latch, and the working hinge. . . .

I am the heart contracted by joy. . . .
the longest hair, white
before the rest. . . .

I am there in the basket of fruit
presented to the widow. . . .

I am the musk rose opening
unattended, the fern on the boggy summit. . . .

I am the one whose love
overcomes you, already with you
when you think to call my name. . . .
Reflection:
The gospel reading includes Jesus's invitation to “come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” These days our weariness seems constant and our burdens perhaps heavier than ever. The global pandemic, and the worry of how we will ever get out of it, bring a heaviness to our thoughts and emotions. At the same time, the shocking events that reveal the depth and persistence of racism in our society remind us that burdens are so much heavier for those whose “backs are against the wall” (Howard Thurman).

The poem offers new images – overflowing water, the musk rose, a basket of fruit, the stone step and the working hinge – that may serve to expand or deepen our understanding of the gospel.

Meditation:
What about Jesus's invitation to “come to me and I will give you rest” speaks to you in this moment?
How can we carry one another's burdens in an anxious and difficult time?
How can we respond to those beyond our immediate community whose backs are against the wall?
What particular words and images from the poem speak to your heart?

Prayers
We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today
We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer
We bring to God a troubled situation in our world
We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust
We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection
We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives
We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. Amen.

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ’s holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. Amen.