

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Fifth Sunday of Easter

... 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.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Gospel

John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

"O Taste and See"

by Denise Levertov

The world is not with us enough.

O taste and see

The subway Bible poster said,
meaning The Lord, meaning
if anything all that lives
to the imagination's tongue,

Grief, mercy, language,
tangerine, weather, to
breathe them, bite,
savor, chew, swallow, transform

Into our flesh our
deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince,
living in the orchard and being hungry, and plucking the fruit.

Meditation:

In today's reading from the gospel of John, Jesus invites us to follow him with the intimate metaphor of a plant with potential to bear fruit. This age-old imagery is just one of many that connects us to Jesus through the natural world, and one of many that binds us organically to Jesus, as if we were of the same flesh. We renew this relationship every time we partake of the Eucharist, and every time we fulfill our own unique role in the larger body of Christ. The hope, of course, is that together, we (with Jesus) bear fruit. Denise Levertov's poem casts us not as bearers of fruit in a life with Christ, but partakers of that fruit. Her imagery here is down to earth and real, taking inspiration from a subway poster, and reminding us that within our broken lives of grief and weather and language, we can still find and taste the sweetness of the orchard's fruit.

Questions for Reflection:

When you hear or read Jesus talking about fruit, what do you picture? Why do you picture that particular fruit?

What does it mean to you to be "living in the orchard" and "plucking the fruit"?

Levertov is inspired by a subway poster - where have you found inspiration in unlikely places lately?

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.**

Poem and Meditation offered by: Matt Bentley