

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Seventh 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

The heavens are open wide
since Jesus our brother, our Redeemer,
has entered through the veil.
We thank you for his new and living way,
by which we join the unnumbered millions
who are with you forever.
Praise to you our God; you answer prayer. Amen.

The Gospel

John 17:6-19

Jesus prayed for his disciples, “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

Poem: “The Best Thing in the World”

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

What's the best thing in the world?
June-rose, by May-dew impearled;
Sweet south-wind, that means no rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure, not in haste to end;
Beauty, not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over-plain;
Light, that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world ?
— Something out of it, I think.

Meditation:

Jesus's prayer from John can come across at times as a clash of so many pronouns - my/mine/me/your/yours/their/theirs - that it can sometimes be hard to understand what, exactly, Jesus is saying/praying. Perhaps the power in his prayer is simply that we belong to God, and therefore to something transcending "the world". And yet, isn't it through our everyday, mundane lives that we are repeatedly surprised by God and taken out of those same everyday, mundane lives? Elizabeth Barrett Browning's simple, powerful poem reminds us of this fundamental paradox. Like the incarnate God as Jesus, everyday experiences of worldly beauty, truth, and pleasure are also our way of glimpsing the otherworldly presence of God.

Questions for Reflection:

For you, today, what is the best thing in the world?

Think of transcendent moments of beauty or truth that have caught you by surprise. What 'worldly' experience sparked that 'otherworldly' experience?

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 Selection and Meditation by Matt Bentley

