

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

... 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

Spirit of energy, Spirit of change, in whose power Jesus is anointed to be the hope of the nations: pour yourself also upon us, without reserve or distinction, that we may have confidence and strength to plant your justice on the earth, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Gospel

Luke 5: 1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Poem: "Ordinary Plenty"

By James Scruton (b. 1943)

What did you call it? Heather? Wheat?
Of just an ordinary field

Of uncut hay the late sun lit
To fool your eye with sudden gold?

The whole day seemed to settle on
The rough pond of that ripened straw,
That sunlit lake of heavy grain.
You still can't say quite what you saw.

Since then, how many roads have passed
Through other places unremarked
As those few acres of long grass?
The dust and gravel where you parked

Led into hills already lost
To that deep light, and you would turn
To more exotic plains of whin
And thistle, furze and gorse. But that last

Look in your rear-view mirror filled
The car like folktale straw made gold,
Like loaves and fishes giving more
And going further than they were.

Meditation

Revisiting today's gospel, you may be struck by certain images: the daily chore of washing out nets by the shore, the makeshift use of a small boat as a dais to address the crowd, and of course the abundant catch of the day, which converts Peter, James, and John to Jesus's ministry. Of course, that abundance also has a flip side - the straining of the nets and the sinking of the boats. Implicitly, today's story seems to teach that abundance left to sit still can backfire, leading to rotten fruit, broken nets, or to sunken ships. Jesus's followers see this abundance as a catalyst for action: following the call.

Today's poem situates abundance in the late summer fields that, in the rear-view mirror, hint at future acts of "ordinary plenty".

Questions for Reflection

In the rear-view mirror of your mind, what abundance has blessed your life?

What role does that abundance play in your spiritual life?

What images stand out for you this time as you revisit the gospel?

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 Reflections this month offered by: Matt Bentley