

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Second Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 5

... 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

Almighty God,
by your grace alone
we are accepted and called to your service;
strengthen us by your Holy Spirit and empower our calling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Scripture Reading

Mark 3:20-35

The crowd came together again, so that Jesus and his disciples could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Poem: “Pax”

by D.H. Lawrence

All that matters is to be at one with the living God
to be a creature in the house of the God of Life.
Like a cat asleep on a chair
at peace, in peace
and at one with the master of the house, with the mistress,
at home, at home in the house of the living,
sleeping on the hearth, and yawning before the fire.
Sleeping on the hearth of the living world
yawning at home before the fire of life
feeling the presence of the living God
like a great reassurance
a deep calm in the heart
a presence
in his own and greater being, as of the master sitting at the board
in the house of life.

Meditation:

Half-hidden within this difficult gospel passage is a great wisdom: our true home is with God. Among the better known moments in this discourse within a story is “a house divided,” a phrase which has played such an important role in our nation’s history, and has become all too pertinent again in our own time. And the mysterious “binding the strong man,” has become the basis for an influential socio-political commentary on Mark’s gospel. The seeming rejection of family ties, so threatening to many, actually clears the way for the liberating discovery that wherever, however, and to whomever we were born, we are first and always God’s children, and that when we put allegiance to God above all else, we are set free.

The poem, which may at first seem cozy, like a cat before the fire, reveals itself as a powerful and liberating expression of that same wisdom: in the house of God, there is a place at the table for everyone. The great stillness of the poem is a sign, not of passivity, but of strength and confidence. In the house of life, those who sit at the table are at peace within themselves, and at home in the greater being of God.

Questions for Reflection:

What are your feelings, now in this time of bitter national strife, when you hear the phrase, “a house divided?”

In the gospel passage, Jesus and his friends are so busy they have no time even to eat. His family fears he has gone out of his mind. When have you felt that way? What helped you get out of that cycle, and back to a place more like the hearth and table in the house of life?

Can you envision your true home? What does the house of life look like for you?

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.**