

Peace, Quiet, Gift and Grace

Preached by

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August 6, 2023

For Reflection:

There is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk.

M. F. K. Fisher

Hebrew Scripture Reading: *Psalm 72:10-19*

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Long may he live! May gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.

May there be abundance of grain in the land; may it wave on the tops of the mountains; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field.

May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun. May all nations be blessed in him; may they pronounce him happy.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

Epistle Reading: *1 Thessalonians 5.12-22*

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Until not long before the lock down, we had a semi-traditional practice of including one communion service each year as a time of reflection and prayer. While we often offered it in the bleak midwinter, on occasion we offered it at this point in the summer, before the season's final days and hurtling into fall programming here and in our homes, schools and workplaces. It is a good day to pause, reflect and listen for the Spirit of God.

As an introvert, I was interested to read a book published a number of years ago: *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. The world has gotten a lot noisier since then. The news blares the sounds of political debates, war and destruction, glaciers collapse, mud slides, tornados and fires roar, death and gun violence, falling bombs and deadly drones—all at the highest possible volume. Cars in the lane next to us thump to the beat of music so loud, our cars move; stores are filled with Muzak. Hearing ourselves think, let alone listening for our spirits and God's word is no easy thing. So, today, we will pause and give ourselves the gift of quiet, with the prayer that along with it comes God's peace and grace.

We are different parts from the same source, varied images of One Creator, seeking both simplicity and unity—what we call communion with our Lord. Today in meditation, we, who are formed in the image of our Creator, look toward that Creator, praying so that we might see more clearly our Lord and how we are made in God's own image. We then become the reflecting images of God – "reflecting" in both its meaning—seeking understanding and power to discern God's purposes for us and then to be images of the divine in the world.

Everyone is invited to sit comfortably, in a relaxed position, eyes closed.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Feel God's breath entering your lungs.

Feel the Word of creation pulse through your heart.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Feel the Spirit of God beginning to flow outward from your caring heart....to your stomach until the tension you hold there fades away.

Feel it flow through your hips, legs and feet – the limbs that carry you to serve --

Let them relax until they are bearing no weight but your own, and not even all of that.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Feel the Spirit flow upward through your shoulders, arms and hands, until they too, are relaxed and free of tension.

Let the Spirit flow up through your neck releasing its tension; let it flow into your mind, stilling all

the list-making, the anxieties, the obligations...

Let the Spirit flow until you can feel God tending to every cell in your body,
responding to your needs

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Hear God speaking peace to restless spirits.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

speaking healing to wounded souls

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

speaking hope where there is only discouragement

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Feel the joy of God touching each cell of your body, touching and joining you in joy.

Now let that Spirit flow back through your body

through your limbs and ligaments,

bones and blood

restoring your heart

and your loving Spirit.

Know that you are restored and healed.

That you can return to this moment of quiet and peace with your creator whenever you desire.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

When you are ready, gradually return to this place
and open your eyes.

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Amen.