

Good Friday -2024

In the Centering Prayer group that meets on Wednesdays, there is no teacher. We are all students and teachers as we share our takes on what the scripture of the day is saying to each of us.

This week's verse from the Gospel of Thomas was:

Jesus said:

If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel.

If spirit came into being because of the body, that is a marvel of marvels.

Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty.

The way I heard it, was that Jesus was saying that in the beginning God's Spirit breathed human flesh into being. And, we live as people in whom the Spirit dwells and, as the Body of Christ, among whom the Spirit dwells. So, what we think of as two separate states of being – Body and soul, earth and heaven, secular and sacred – are not in truth separate at all. They exist together to make this indwelling wholeness. So there is this synergism, this aliveness when body and spirit, earthly and divine, secular and sacred are one ongoing exchange of life and love and power.

And we ask that question, which resists a satisfactory answer: How did we come to let something so amazingly intact become so divided and separated?

The third line “how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty” is another seeming dichotomy, but it's referring to the two becoming one.

This line reminds me of some lines from a poem about Maundy Thursday. The poet writes about Jesus and God interchangeably, as if referring to one and the same person -
-of human and divine moving, acting as one.

Here [Jesus] shows the full extent of love

To us whose love is always incomplete,

In vain we search the heavens high above,

The God of love is kneeling at our feet.

How this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty!
It is marvelous, thanks for pointing it out, Jesus!

And we can marvel that the great wealth that is God
has come to dwell in the impoverished state of mere humanity
separated from the divine –
has come to dwell on earth in the person of Jesus.
And in God's reaching down,
our impoverished, separated, incomplete world
is embraced and taken in, and heaven and earth are joined..

As has been said by many, notably St. Augustine:
God became human so that we might become divine.
Jesus stayed intact – one with God – so that we who live in such a divided world,
might, through him, find ourselves put back together, made intact, made one
with our indwelling God.

I think that's what is behind our oxymoronic statements of faith such as:
The way of the cross is the way of life and freedom.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

We can only call this day Good because of the hindsight Easter gives.
Before there ever was death, there was Love.
In the cross, love has conquered death,
unity has overcome estrangement, forgiveness has healed guilt,
and joy has conquered despair.
Thanks be to God.

From the gospel of John, Jesus speaks 3 times from the cross.

“Woman behold your son.” Behold, your mother.”

Jesus gives us to one another.
In the name of love, in the community of the faithful,
baptismal water becomes thicker than blood.
In tradition, Mary is seen as the Church
and the beloved disciple as its individual members.
We are entrusted into one another's care.
Healthy, loving, intact family can reach out
with fullness and hospitality and abundance to the world.

“I am thirsty”

Such a simple unadorned statement that speaks of basic human need.
We have remembered his scourging, the heavy walk under rough hewn cross,
the thorns in his brow.
He hangs in agony and utters a simple human need - that he is thirsty.

There are big problems in the world.
The people at the foot of the cross could not unhang him.
There was no taking him down at that point.
Sometimes we can't do everything to make everything right.
And he didn't ask for impossible feats at that moment.
He spoke a basic need that could be met.
Perhaps God gathers up all the small tasks we are able to do,
and turns them into something that *does* make a difference.

“It is finished”

He has moved through a fractured and broken world.
He has remained intact in his one being with God.
In order for his unity with God not to be broken, he allowed his body to be broken.

But now, it is finished, complete.

And now we turn to God with prayers
That all may be made whole, complete, through the power of such Love.