

Week Beginning 2nd March 2015 Paint on a Broader Canvas

Fellow travellers on the inner quest have shared an important realisation with me – one that afforded them a welcome way of coping when their own load seemed heavy, making the thought of another day quite difficult. It has to do with realising that we are, especially in our suffering, simply one person among many in this state we call 'life'. . . There is a 'wound' in humanity, a fragility inseparable from the human condition. Now here is one of the universal treasures of wisdom for keeping a level of acceptance and joy in our precarious daily lives. Once we realise ourselves as part of a struggling world, not alienated from it, an awareness of deep connectedness and interdependence arises within us. In the face of this awareness the human heart can only feel compassion. And compassion is a powerful healer. It takes us out of ourselves. We are fashioned for compassion. We all carry the seeds. When those seeds grow, our inner selves become free. . .

It is also quite explicit in the Christian creed that by uniting our own pain and that of a 'groaning creation' with the passion of Christ, we are finalising here and now, in time and space, God's redemption of the universe. Walking through the streets of life, with a head and heart full of compassion, changes the very face of the earth itself. This is the work of angels. Through a grace-filled empathy and sympathy, all suffering now takes on a new meaning. Teilhard de Chardin said that if all the world's pain could be borne in this bonding way, even for an instant, a new world would be born. . .

There is an astonishing shift in our attitude to our own work, both inner and outer, when we begin to see it against that infinite horizon, and to our own suffering when we begin to believe in its infinite value for the healing of our sisters and brothers, and of the whole earth, as we fill out and fill in, all that is still incomplete, as Paul puts it, in the work of Jesus Christ. . .

This reflection, about painting on a broader canvas, about seeing our lives against an infinite horizon, about reverencing the sheer mystery and amazing wonder of our own being, and that of all creation, cannot but shift our whole perspective on whatever is currently disturbing our peace. (Travelling Light pp 55,56,57,58)

Follow-up -

If you would like to explore mindful meditation, try this simple daily praxis:

To appreciate the stillness and vastness of our world, of the universe, of the cosmos, and our place within the mystery, we need to become aware of the inner rhythm of our breathing and our heartbeat. It is one thing to know something of the deeper significance of what we do, 'the infinite horizon' of our daily work; it is another to feel it from within. To sense our pain in the context of the 'wound of humanity' and to believe more whole-heartedly in the healing of which we are capable, try to follow your breath in its ebb and flow. Sit comfortably and surrender your thoughts and images to the sensations of your body and your breathing. There is no need to deepen the way you inhale and exhale, at this point; the exercise is about becoming aware of the timing of each movement and of the pause in between.

There is a quiet similarity here with the turning seasons and the rhythm of nature. At these moments of non-doing, our eternal longing for ultimate intimacy is nourished and held by the embrace of God. (Travelling Light p59)