

Quiet Day 10 September 2016

Progress in Prayer Part I

SCHEDULE

9:30 - 9:40 **Introduction**

9:40 - 10:40 **First Conference**

9:40 - 9:55 First session of reflections on the theme of the day

9:55 - 10:18 First session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

10:20 - 10:40 First session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 10:18 to 10:20. At 10:20 we will intone the bell and begin silent prayer.]

10:40 - 11:40 **Second Conference**

10:40 - 10:55 Second session of reflections on the theme of the day

10:55 - 11:18 Second session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

11:20 - 11:40 Second session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 11:18 to 11:20. At 11:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

11:40 - 12:00 **Third Conference**

11:40 - 11:55 Third session of reflections on the theme of the day

11:55 - 12:18 Third session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

12:20 - 12:40 Third session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 12:18 to 12:20. At 12:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

12:40 - 1:00 **Eucharist. All are welcome.**

Progress in Prayer Part I

This new series will offer practical insight for the practice of prayer and relationship with God. We'll distinguish types of prayer and experiences that occur along the various stages of the spiritual journey. As we do, we'll explore experiences of and progress in prayer that occurs in the prayer closet, both vocal prayer and silent, contemplative prayer; and we'll consider experiences of and progress in prayer that occurs outside the prayer closet in daily life. In all, we'll be fostering an enhanced experience of listening for, responding to, and abiding in the inspirations and movements of the Holy Spirit within and without.

Who Is God & the Impossible Human Situation

An excerpt from Thomas Keating's *Consenting to God As God Is*, pp. 43-48, 52-53 (excerpts)

“The light of Christmas according to Luke is the realization that Christ is eager to be born in us, and that similar situations are going to happen in our lives that occurred in his earthly life We are to incarnate Christ in our daily lives in spite of the obstacles that surround us. Christians then should not be surprised at being opposed or even persecuted by their compatriots, relatives, and friends [or simply their circumstances].

... “The following of Christ is thus not a magic carpet to bliss! It does not assure us of wealth and security. It does not promise us a ripe old age. It does not provide us with fame and fortune, power and control over others, and what is even more significant, it does not provide us with the power to control ourselves.

“That last point is an important issue. The process in which Christ is born in us and transforms us into citizens of the Kingdom is a state of consciousness rather than a place. It is not *any* state of consciousness, but *Christ's consciousness of the Father as Abba*. There the Good News reveals the extraordinary beauty and depth of God's invitation and challenge to become divine. God is not just transcendent, or the God of Israel, or the God of armies, but the Abba, our loving Father, the God of infinite mercy.

“Here we need to look at the broader context of the human family. Where did it come from? Where is it going? Is it a species that started out in paradise with Adam and Eve, or is it rather a species that is evolving, the chief of whose problems is rooted in the fact that it has not become fully human yet, let alone divine? God knows each member of the human family through and through with the loving concern of the most caring of parents – an idea more or less contained in the relationship that Jesus had with the Ultimate Reality as Abba. This term was unheard of in religious circles in his time. God is close, tender, motherly, and all the other attributes that go with the homey Aramaic word for *father*. This is the revolutionary attitude toward the Ultimate Reality that Jesus communicated to his contemporaries and is trying to do for us.

“All that Jesus teaches about his Father does not change the human condition from its powerlessness and confusion, its ignorance and darkness, and its dependency on animal neurological networks that exist in our tripartite brain. Our problem is that we have not integrated the lower instincts of our nature that are rooted in our animal ancestry. We are confronted with the struggle to be fully human when we still have all the neurology to enable us to live in the world as thinking animals.

“Modern research has made clear that it is not only our developmental behaviors from early childhood that separate us from the divine experience. The physiology of the brain depends on habits entrenched from earliest childhood. The instinctual needs of human nature are not just ideas, but physical constructs in which the brain reacts to the external stimuli of the senses through electrical currents and translates them, not as we would like, but with the same habitual reactions we have experienced in the past. [for millennia!]

“When we try to change an emotional pattern or behavior, we need to be aware that the brain is set up to do its own thing, which is to send the energy down the same old channels that were dug in early childhood. Our first job is to get a bulldozer, so to speak, and flatten the playing field. A

bulldozer unfortunately does not fit into the brain! Thus, to change the way that we react to things emotionally, mentally, and sociologically is a massive and lengthy undertaking.

“We still do not know how the collective unconscious affects our behavior, especially how our genetic DNA determines in some degree who we are. We are in an interior place where we can no longer return to the freedom from responsibility of the animals from which we evolved, and we cannot ascend into fully human behavior, and still less that of the Kingdom of Heaven.

“... We are in fact *crucified* between heaven and earth.

“The Good News of the Gospel is in a reality that involves a certain amount of bad news. But it is not news to God. He is fully aware of the evolutionary process and is probably less concerned about our inevitable faults than we are. If we are unevolved, God would hardly expect us to behave like angels or even as mature human beings.

“We find ourselves with the clear call from the Gospel to become divine by participation, which is what grace is. ... We are born and brought up without the experience of God while possessing at the same time the destiny of a creature designed for boundless happiness. Our desire for happiness, which is probably the greatest proof of God’s presence in us, has been inserted into the most unlikely candidates that anyone could possibly imagine.

“God seems to have chosen the least of all intellectual creatures for the major manifestation of his inmost being. Perhaps there are many other worlds that will be discovered in time. Why should this be the only universe when we believe that God is infinite? In any case, it is the only one we know, and hence this is the one that is the primary focus of revelation.

“The basic question that everybody has as a partner in the drama of human life is how matter – what seems to be the very opposite of all that we mean by God – is destined to become divine in us, a project that truly no one but God could possibly have thought up.

“Our destiny is God’s own infinite happiness. We are meant to participate in it, but the path to it involves first the experience of our powerlessness to achieve it by ourselves. This is one of the biggest of all the issues of our spiritual life: how to be peaceful with this situation. We possess almost infinite aspirations in a body, soul, and consciousness that make us aware that we cannot possibly gain peace and happiness under our own power. In fact, we tend to resist God’s efforts to provide us with the attitudes that would be most helpful in achieving it.

...

(page 52) “This great God of ours, as Jesus has revealed him, does not feel bound by his own rules. Thus, what you least expect to happen happens, and what you expect to happen doesn’t. This divine pattern of action warns us not to judge Joseph or anyone else, including external behaviors that seem to be inappropriate. Only God knows all the facts. His database has information that we do not possess. Nobody but him knows all the factors that influenced us in early life. We know that there is a certain window of freedom of choice in our decisions and behaviors, and that this measure of freedom is the specific human predicament. Animals, vegetables, and other forms of life do not have this problem. Humans are greatly influenced by secondary causes like social events, other people, and emotional or mental problems, but our actual accountability in a particular choice is God’s secret.

“Each of us carries the burden, sometimes very heavy, of our ancestry, our social milieu, and their influences on us from the time of our conception. God knows exactly what these are. He loves us just as we are, and because of his infinite compassion, our weakness seems to be especially

attractive to him. To repeat once again what has already been said, the most basic human double bind consists of having the transcendent destiny of boundless happiness as a sharer in God's divine life, and at the same time the awareness of the impossibility of reaching it under our own strength. The good news is that there is a way to deal with this dilemma. That path is modeled by Joseph and Mary, each in their own way. Basically, it consists of being content for love of God to live with our external difficulties, endless faults, and overwhelming weaknesses that constitute our particular slice of the human condition.

“Not knowing where true happiness is to be found is called *illusion* in most of the world religions. Concupiscence or craving is looking for that happiness in the wrong places. God's grace gives us the ever-deepening conviction that even if we knew where true happiness is to be found, we are utterly incapable of pursuing it on our own strength. We are thus completely dependent on God's mercy.

“Is this a disaster? This is actually the first Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:3). The Fruits of the Spirit and the Beatitudes that come from the Seven Gifts of the Spirit are participations in the mind and heart of Christ, communicated to us in virtue of his transmission of the Kingdom of God through scripture, the sacraments, and our acceptance of God's will for us. The beauty of the first Beatitude is its sense of complete dependence on God. It is a growing awareness of our personal spiritual destitution, without being upset by it or disturbed: it is contentment to be powerless and, at the same time, totally dependent on God to prepare us for participating in the divine life.”

Ways of Seeing the Spiritual Journey

[All are totally dependent upon how we see God, which is the ultimate question upon which all other questions are based and from our perception of God all other questions are answered]

1. The Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way, the Unitive Way
2. There is an Other
To Become the Other
There is no Other
3. **John 14:6** I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.

“As the Way, Jesus invites us to follow his example step-by-step into the bosom of the Father. As the Truth, he shares with us, through participation in his death on the cross, the experience of the transpersonal aspect of the Father. As the Life, he leads us to unity with the Godhead beyond personal and impersonal relationships. On the Christian path, God is known first as the personal God, then as the transpersonal God, and finally as the Ultimate Reality beyond all personal and impersonal categories.”

Thomas Keating

Summary: The Way = “personal” relationship with the Father

The Truth = the transpersonal aspect of the Father

The Life = unity beyond personal and impersonal relationships/categories

Thus, Luke's model for discipleship has this structure:

The Way to Jerusalem

9:1 (hidden) 5 time Jesus' Passion 7 times lose life to find life (hidden) 19:48

This call to transformation/discipleship/follow me is balanced by numerous stories of boundless compassion and unlimited and unconditional welcome² and Jesus' mission statement at the beginning of his ministry in Luke:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
on account of which he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor,
He has sent me, to preach to the captives release
and to the blind recovery of sight,
to send away the ones having been crushed in release,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

A Perspective on the Path of Transformation/Discipleship in Matthew

The Beatitudes

5:1-12

Poor in Spirit

Those who mourn

The meek

Those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness

The merciful

The pure in heart

The peacemakers

... The persecuted

The letting go & dismantling
of the false self and the
purification of FAITH & HOPE

Springing from the experience of Divine Love and
the indwelling Holy Spirit, as the false self is
dismantled and the emotional wounds of a
lifetime are healed, the new self emerges and
matures, purifying our unconscious and flooding
our consciousness with the energy of Divine
Love: Jesus' consciousness of Abba, Father. The
purification of LOVE

Who is God? Or, How do you see God?

"[W]hen you say God, you don't really mean God. You mean your idea of God, or, to put it
another way, you mean God as not-God. I say that because whatever we say about God is
more unlike who God is than saying nothing. And so, where do you begin? Well, all that
words do, all that dogmas do, all that doctrines and rituals can do for us is to point in the

2 Many of these incidents occur before this call to the way of discipleship, though several significant incidents occur within this
section. From the announcement of his mission in 4:18-19 to the beginning of the way to Jerusalem, there is one story after
another of Jesus' healing ministry and welcome to all, especially "sinners," and his kind and revelatory teaching to all about the
Kingdom (Presence) of God that was available to all.

direction of the mystery, of the super-meaning of God. ... It's a mystery, and a reality at one and the same time, and so this warns us that we have to be prepared to expand our idea of God in ways that are more and more inclusive but less and less articulate. ... So, nothing could be more elusive ... and yet nothing is more present or fundamental."

Thomas Keating, Excerpted from "Who is God?" audio recording

"If we are absolutely grounded in the *absolute love of God that protects us from nothing even as it sustains us in all things*, then we can face all things with courage and tenderness and touch the hurting places in others and in ourselves with love."

James Finley, quoted in Richard Rohr's meditation, 30 July 2015

"Fear draws us to the center we have created, the ego self. Love expands from our real center, the true self."

Thomas Keating, Excerpted from Contemplative Outreach News, June 2015
"Notes From A Deep Conversation"

"Take and accept yourself just as you are, where you are. If you are aggressive, lustful, fearful, or shy and passive, notice your feelings before, during, and after each incident, without emotional reactions of blame, shame, anger or discouragement. Let God work with your faults and limitations. Just recognize them and be with them, without trying to correct them directly. As you watch them, feel them, and accept them, their force and exaggeration will gradually diminish. Keep moving to the center of your being where divine love is and be present to and welcome whatever bodily feeling or emotion that is happening. The present moment contains all we need to be happy."

Thomas Keating, Excerpted from Contemplative Outreach News, June 2015
"Notes From A Deep Conversation"

A Reflection on the Emptiness, the Nothing

The window and the brick – there is more empty space in the brick than there is solid matter. Perhaps God dwells in or in some sense is the empty space.

"Without thinking or feeling some emotion, there is just awareness. There is then no desire for bliss, enlightenment, or to teach others. Things are just as they are. In that so-called emptiness, enjoyment arises of itself. As soon as we try to enjoy, the enjoyment ceases. Somehow at the bottom of emptiness (openness, pure awareness), there is enjoyment, fullness, presence, and peace.

"Bring the same emptiness and freedom to each moment and its content. Then you will be happy even in the midst of suffering.

Thomas Keating, Excerpted from Contemplative Outreach News, June 2015
"Notes From A Deep Conversation"