

Third Sunday in Lent

Use some or all of this reflection to help guide your personal journey through this week of Lent.

Reflect

'There have always been those who speak of God as Wholly Other, inconceivable and remote, utterly unlike our abortive attempts to picture him in our own image. Others have come to see God as the Reality present in all things, the true ground of our being. Here is the paradox of God transcendent and God immanent, God beyond and God within, two approaches which speak both of my undeniable sense of awe and longing, my knowing and unknowing, yet an encounter deep within myself.'

Michael Mayne: *Learning to Dance* (Dartman Longman Todd 2001)

'Why do we go to church Fynn?'

'To understand Mister God more.'

'Less'

'Less what?'

'To understand Mister God less.'

'Wait a minute. You're flipped!'

'No, I'm not...You go to church to make Mister God really *really* big. When you make Mister God really *really* big, then you really *really* don't understand Mister God, - then you do... Mister God keeps shedding bits all the way through your life until the time comes when you admit freely and honestly that you don't understand Mister God at all. At this point you have let Mister God be the proper size and Wham there he is laughing at you.'

Anna speaking to Fynn from Fynn: *Mister God This is Anna* (Collins Fountain Paper Backs 1974)

Read

6. Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
7. let the wicked forsake their way
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

12. For you shall go out in joy
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 55:6-12 (NRSVUE)

Ponder

- What is this passage saying to you right now?
- Some commentators talk about this passage as describing prayer - where the rain is like prayer which falls on us making us fertile and bringing us back to life
 - Has prayer ever felt like that for you?
- What do you feel about 'seeking' and 'returning to the Lord'?
 - What would that mean for you if you took that call seriously today?
- How do you live with the paradox of knowing God...but not?

Do

Is there one thing this week you could approach, renewed by this passage

- A way of 'returning to God' might invite you to act or think or be in a different way to what you usually act or think or are.
- If the image of prayer being rain has caught you, what kind of rain speaks to you as prayer – a gentle mist, a downpour, a thunderstorm?
- Could you spend time this week simply sitting with this image of God whose thoughts are not your thoughts and ways are not your ways....and just notice what comes?

Prayer

Day by day Lord three things I pray:

To see you with full vision, but knowing I will not see or understand all.

To love you with more of myself - my heart, mind body and soul, but knowing I am often unsure; thinking I know but really I don't.

and

To follow you more nearly, but knowing that I will stumble, and be diverted, busy or weary along the road.

These things I pray in trust and with hope because I am walking this road with Jesus. Amen

Listen

Here's something a bit different to listen to – e e cummings reads his own poem, *I thank You God for most this amazing day*.

<https://youtu.be/axH9A28CTjw?si=Hvd6RzfihtUzLCzV>

Here's the same poem in a choral arrangement by Dan Forrest.

<https://youtu.be/DdZbA-HoHYA?si=3UJnREgyVRWDY4Ov>

*i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes*

*(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)*

*how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?*

*(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)*