

Dear Friend

"Thy Kingdom Come" is the time between Ascension and Pentecost devoted to prayer for some of our friends to come to know Jesus as their Lord. In our daily reflections, we have concentrated on the Prayer Journal prepared to help us and today is the last day we will be using it for our daily meditations. There's one more day left in the Journal if you have time to work through it tomorrow.

The theme for today, the 10th day, is Silence and the reading suggested is this:

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13)

This is the first time we have had a reading from the Old Testament in the Journal and it is probably not as well-known as some of the other readings we have had. Again, it's surprising how well it fits with our times. It has struck me that the virus the world is fighting is very much like the plagues of Old Testament times and the descriptions of the events in this passage is another list of disasters which put people into danger.

But after all the horrors, we get to "a sound of sheer silence". It comes as a blessed relief from all the noise of what went before. We are having a lot of "noise" just now. A number of people have said to me that they have stopped watching the news because it's all so awful and just more of the same. We've probably reached the stage where we need a period to listen to a sound of sheer silence. We may see the action of God all around us, but it's only in the silence that we can hear the voice of God speaking clearly to us.

In scripture, Psalm 46 is a wonderful example and includes the words "Be still and know that I am God". Psalm 62 also says "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation". Both psalms are worth looking at in detail.

Silence is difficult for us as our brains keep on chattering, but it's a very good practice to try to stop that noise for a while. If you find it difficult, there are lots of useful articles on the internet or books on the subject so do try to find something to help you.

I'd like to leave you with these hymn words:

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

Amen.