

Making Space for God

Invocation

Lord, I so wish to prepare well for this time.
I so want to make all of me ready and attentive and available to you.
Please help me to clarify and purify my intentions.
I have so many contradictory desires.
I get preoccupied with things that don't really matter or last.
I know that if I give you my heart,
whatever I do will follow my new heart.

In all that I am today, all that I try to do,
all my encounters, reflections - even the frustrations and failings
and especially in this time of prayer,
in all of this may I place my life in your hands.
Lord, I am yours. Make of me what you will. Amen.



"Pilgrims on the Road to Emmaus by James Tissot 1896

Arrival Take thirty minutes to settle yourself. Close your eyes, take deep breaths, and try to absorb the quiet stillness of the gardens.

- What is happening to your body today? Are you anxious, tired, restless, or sleepy? Give your body to Jesus for the day. He owns it.
- What family or ministry concerns press on your mind? Note these but don't dwell on them. Hand them to Jesus for safekeeping.
- What hopes and fears do you have as you prepare to meet with your Father in heaven? He promises to listen. He loves us like no other on earth. Ask him to be your shelter for the day.

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:13-35

The Emmaus Road story gives us another glimpse into the process of Christian maturity. False assumptions and dead end dreams are shattered to make way for a more profound encounter with God. Beliefs that fail to embrace the grand goodness and wisdom of God must be exposed and set right. The pathway to deeper Christian and human maturity often leads through the valley of humiliation and disillusionment but surprisingly it is at exactly that point that we meet the Lord in our midst. Take time to read the passage a couple of times.

Questions

- In Verse 13 the disciples were walking away from Jerusalem. What might Jerusalem have represented in terms of their hopes and dreams? What did they hope Jesus would do?

- Why did Jesus ask them questions even though he knew the answers? How do you feel when you get to tell your story to someone who really listens?
- The disciples identify Jesus as a prophet. Jesus identifies himself as Messiah who suffers. How does that difference in definition affect their ability to recognize Jesus in their midst?
- In your own journey, when have you experienced disillusionment or humiliation? Describe the process and feelings involved. If you found a new hope, what was the process that got you to the other side?

Reading for Reflection:

"Happy people get a lot of joy from receiving benefits from others while people leading meaningful lives get a lot of joy from giving to others," explained Kathleen Vohs, one of the authors of the study, in a recent presentation at the University of Pennsylvania. In other words, meaning transcends the self while happiness is all about giving the self what it wants. People who have high meaning in their lives are more likely to help others in need. "If anything, pure happiness is linked to not helping others in need," the researchers write.

There's More to Life Than Being Happy (Emily Esfahani Smith)

Depending on our upbringing and religious education, we each have varying images of God. We may think of God as someone who is waiting to catch us when we get things wrong or as someone who disciplines us and makes us go back to the beginning and start again when we mess up. I don't like or trust those images, because they don't resonate with my own experience, and over time, I am coming to see God rather differently. Suppose God is continually striving to draw the more life-giving outcome from whatever we present? Suppose God, who is Life and Love itself, longs for nothing more than our coming to the fullness of who we can be, and will start over with us whatever happens, from exactly where we are, and lead us forward into the next stage of our growth? And, by the way, wouldn't this be what most parents want for their children, and isn't this the way most parents encourage their children—not by censoring them over and over, but by being with them where they are, whatever the mess, and helping them move forward from that point?

The Other Side of Chaos: Breaking Through When Life Is Breaking Down (Margaret Silf)

We tend to write Moses' true personality out of the Exodus story. (Cecil B. DeMille's classic, *The Ten Commandments*, portrays him as a swashbuckling figure who does all the talking, with no help from Aaron.) We don't ask why God chose as his prophet a stutterer with a public speaking phobia. But we should. The book of Exodus is short on explication, but its stories suggest that introversion plays yin to the yang of extroversion; that the medium is not always the message; and that people followed Moses because his words were thoughtful, not because he spoke them well.

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking (Susan Cain)

Hope has two beautiful daughters: Anger, at the way things are, and Courage, to work for change.

St. Augustine

Benediction: Lord, allow me your servant to go in peace. I have experienced your salvation which you have prepared for everyone. Uphold me as I seek to serve in your name. Amen