

The Word That Whispers

Well, it's Christmas morning and guaranteed there's a ton of smart phones and notebooks and TV's and blue tooth speakers and all kinds of other gadgets just waiting to be opened and googled with and gazed at!

We truly live in a world of instant information, constant stimulation and never ending entertainment.

For most of us these days, the last thing we see at night is not the face of our loved one, but the screen of an iPhone; and the first thing we see in the morning is not the stars still lingering before dawn, but the morning news show or the latest email or text message.

Just last year a university did a study about some of this stuff, and the effect it has on us, the shape this modern life is shaping we modern people into.

The experiment gave the participants, hundreds of men and women, electric shocks!

These were mild shocks, but strong enough and unpleasant enough that every single participant agreed that he and she would pay money NOT to get shocked again.

That is, until each person was asked to sit alone in a room for a period of time, with only their thoughts to accompany themselves: no electronics, no distractions; except there was a button to push if they wanted to shock themselves.

Do you know that within 15 minutes, 2/3 of the men and 1/4 of the women reached for that button and shocked themselves; leading the investigators to conclude that our desire for stimulation; and our inability to simply be still, is changing who we are and how we live as human beings...

For those of us who claim Jesus as our Lord, this is a problem; because ours is not a God who shouts, and if I can't be still, how can I hear the Word who whispers?

If I can't be still, perhaps I will miss the young couple, the woman heavy with child, who desperately needs a place for the night, a safe place to bring her new born into the world.

If I can't be still, I become the innkeeper who asks,

"Do you know what its like to run an Inn???"

— it's like being lost in a forest of a million trees!!...

....Each tree being a thing that has to be done: fresh sheets, clean towels, are the children dressed warmly, is there enough money in the bank,..., will there be enough money tomorrow????

.....A million trees, a million things, until finally we have eyes for nothing else, and everything we see turns into a thing...." Beuchner, *Secrets in the Dark*, 10, paraphrased.

If I can't be still, perhaps I shall miss that strange new prophet who talks about mustard seeds and salt and how the most powerful people on earth aren't the usual suspects, but the children, the hungry, the merciful....

If I can't be still, then I'll drive right by that mountaintop where thousands go out to listen to him, and at the end of the day those thousands are famished, yet amazingly, all eat until they can eat no more..... when a couple of loaves of garlic bread and two tilapia are shared....

If I can't be still, I may not pick my head up from the latest text message in time to see that fellow Lazarus, the guy who died days ago, come stumbling out of his tomb, still wearing the suit they buried him in, but, lo and behold, he's alive!

Perhaps we are so afraid to be still because we are so afraid of the world; with its wars and rumors of wars, with our political divisions and gender and race confrontations, with the uncertainties of age and health and even love.

But the Word who whispers is also the Word who is light...

And if we can bring ourselves to be still and listen, we might find that in our stillness we are given a gift to meet the darkness of our times.

"We may find that we are given a gift to proclaim courageously and defiantly against the darkness of our time; against the darkness of our own hearts, in our community, in the hospitals, mental institutions, and prisons; against the darkness in our conversations with one another and in the newspapers; against the darkness that darkens so many sickbeds and the beds of the dying; and against the pernicious darkness of our social conditions.

....With this gift we may proclaim in the face of all darkness that the light of the Word who whispers..... **shines!**" K. Barth, *Sermons*, 74-75. paraphrased.

We can do just that because the Word who whispers frees us from our central conflict, because the Word who whispers is also the Word who is life.

Our central conflict is not between body and soul, nor between sex and chastity, it is not between religion and every day life.

No, our central conflict "is between total freedom and total bondage." Barth, Dogmatics, II,4.

"God didn't become flesh to institute a religion that condemns sexuality or decries the physical world, God became flesh to free us from our attachments to all that is not alive, to liberate us from our endless love affairs with that which doesn't feed us but drains us of life." Blue, From Stone to Living Word, 112. paraphrased.

And to accomplish that, the Word that whispers becomes the Word made flesh, meaning that we don't hand our lives over to theories or dogmas or even creeds — but instead we are invited into all of the ambiguity and joys and depths and hopes and discoveries and yes, even pain, of relationship....because the Word who whispers, the Word made flesh, not only loves you, but --- she likes you too; he is not only open to your pursuit, but he too pursues you.

But to get that, to really get it, we need to develop the ability to be still.

So instead of listening to me prattle on for a few more minutes, lets take these few minutes, this holy morning, and sit, in quiet and stillness, as we ponder and worship and listen for the Word who Whispers.....

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