

Midweek Reflection # 10 ~ “And God was there”

“Christ has trodden all pathways before us, and at every crossroads and by every tree the Word of God speaks out. We have only to be quiet and listen- [to gain] a sense of the world as holy, as the Book of God ~ as a healing mystery, fraught with divine messages.”-St. Patrick’s spirituality as described by Thomas Cahill in How the Irish Saved Civilization

Whenever there’s trouble or tragedy , the question is asked: **“Where is God?”** And so often, the promises of scripture are not enough to soothe the anxious soul asking the question. Whether we turn to the psalmist who assures us,

“If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.” (Psalm 139:8,9,10),

or we listen to Jesus’s promise to his disciples recorded in Matthew 28,

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age,”

the scriptural promise is not that God will rearrange circumstances for the believer, but that God will be present to comfort, strengthen and encourage. Many would rather believe in a “vending machine” kind of God: put in the right amount of coins (faith), and the vending machine will deliver a product (miracle). It is often tough to face life in this broken world with only the evidence of Jesus’s promise of presence in the Gospels to hang on to. I do find great comfort in Dorothy Sayers’s reminder in Creed or Chaos?:

“for whatever reason God chose to make man as he is ~ limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death ~ He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, He has kept His own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When he was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worth while.”

Jesus Christ has indeed “trodden all pathways before us” and knows the pain and suffering we experience. But I’m finding that to truly know His presence, comfort and encouragement we do need to be attentive, “to be quiet and listen.” Once again, the **psalmist reassures us:**

“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you; who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness.”(Psalm 89:15,16 NIV)

All of this is much easier to write than to live! But as I have no choice but to live it, I am grateful for the prayerful support of family, friends and church community that help me to continue to be attentive to our compassionate and present God. And I trust that all through this experience I will be able to proclaim with Walter Wangerin, Jr.,

“And God was there...I had begun to dwell within the circle of God’s presence, wherein is comfort and purpose and life and love and confidence.” (Whole Prayer)

May we all walk this week in the light of His presence.

Under His Mercy,

Howie