

Your Love and Your Grace are Enough for Me

Theme

At the deepest level of our being, we entrust our lives to God's providential care. And when we reflect on our life experience, most of us can see how God's love and grace have supported us through times of great challenge, loss and discouragement—through every season.

Yet knowing this doesn't always keep us confidently grounded in grace and trust in the midst of a hard day, a demanding decision, a time of tension or conflict. Instead at these times we can feel on our own, overwhelmed, alone and anxious. How can contemplative practice make a difference?

Reflection

Jesus said to his disciples, "Has anyone by fussing before the mirror every gotten taller by so much as an inch? If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don't fuss with their appearance—but have you every seen color and design quite like it? If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think He'll attend to you, take pride in you, do the best for you?"

"What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting (doing, achieving) so you can respond to God's giving. . . . Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. You're my dearest friends!"



From *The Message*, Luke 12:22-30, by Eugene Peterson

Cynthia Bourgeault suggests "Witnessing presence is at the gravitational center of one's being and requires a significant degree of inner presence to sustain . . . Guard your heart!"*

What would it mean to guard my heart? To maintain my attention in my heart as I wash dishes, take my morning walk or have a conversation? What if I considered my heart my primary spiritual instrument. Attending to and trusting my heart's movement is the ground of contemplative presence which is rooted in the body's heart-mind more than in the thinking mind. How could living from this ground of being, tuning into it frequently deepen my capacity to maintain inner presence when the going gets rough?

Thinking

Don't you wish they would stop, all the thoughts
swirling around in your head, bees in a hive, dancers
tapping their way across the stage. I should rake the leaves
in the carport, buy Christmas lights. Was there really life on Mars?
What will I cook for dinner? I walk up the driveway,
put out the garbage bins. I should stop using plastic bags,
visit my friend whose husband just left her with the Swedish nanny.
I wish I hadn't said Patrick's painting looks "ominous."
Maybe that's why he hasn't called. Does the car need oil again?
There's a hole in the ozone the size of Texas and everything
seems to be speeding up.

Come, let's stand by the window
And look out at the light on the field. Let's watch how the clouds
cover the sun and almost nothing stirs in the grass.

from *The Moon of August* by Danusha Lameris, Autumn House Press, 2014



Nourish in your heart in the fullness of joy!

In the tragic days of May, 1979, less than ten months before his own death, Bishop Romero exhorted his fellow Christians: "Always nourish in your hearts the fulness of joy . . . I have tried it many times and in the darkest moments . . . when slander and persecution were strongest, tried to unite myself intimately with Christ, my friend, to feel more

comfort than all the joys of the Earth can give—the joy of feeling close to God even when humans do not understand you. It is the deepest joy the heart can have."

"The joy of feeling close to God." . . . "That such joy can be present and amid slander, persecution and darkness that it can help human beings learn to resist and overcome the forces arrayed against life and peace, . . . this is why Christians give themselves body and soul to the beautiful struggle that is prayer."

Douglas E. Christi*

For personal reflection

Take time to ruminate over, ponder, stay with the invitations in these selections. Where is your heart stirred, awakened? Where do you personally sense an invitation to contemplative practices?

For contemplative dialogue

Begin the dialogue with whatever ideas here attract you, whatever you would like to explore more.

- What does Jesus' invitation "Steep yourself in God-reality, God-provisions" mean for you now in this moment? What does it look like in the midst of a day?
- What healing remedy does the poem "Thinking" offer us? How can practicing this heal us and our Earth?
- What could we do in the midst of **this** day, in the throes of our daily routine, our interactions with others and the living world to become more present, more responsive to the spiritual instrument of our heart where presence and guidance are always available to us?
- How do we go about nourishing in our hearts the fullness of joy—even when others do not understand us? How can we support ourselves in practicing this in times of turmoil and darkness?

Practice Nourishes Transformation! Try these communally too.

This month, practice guarding your heart. If you wish, dwell in your heart's frequency in your time of silent contemplation. Then, during the day, whenever you become conscious of your breathing, drop down into your heart's center of gravity and attune to the energy field of love present there. Feel your communion with the Divine.

- In his prayer/poem, *Slow Me Down, Lord*, Cardinal Cushing prays, Teach me the art of taking minute vacations. Try practicing this art for yourself—stop for a moment and look through a kaleidoscope, read a poem, read a joke, look at something lovely—just for a moment, take a vacation.



When God's love and grace feel distant—(and even when they don't)

- For just a few moments contemplate the tree outside your window, the light on the field, the color of the sky
- Nourish in your heart the fullness of joy. Lean into intimacy with the heart of Christ in your darkest moments
- Relax your consciousness; in every moment a sliver of open and easeful being are available to you. Let this consciousness flow into your whole body; embody presence.
- For an unsilent contemplative practice—hum or sing a refrain of a loved melody, chant a psalm, tone a sound; notice the impact on your body.



Additional Resources

Cynthia Bourgeault, *"The Way of the Heart."* <https://parabola.org/2017/01/31/the-way-of-the-heart-heart-cynthia-bourgeault/>

Douglas E. Christi, *The Joy of Feeling Close to God: The Practice of Prayer and the work of Accompaniment.* <http://www.anglicantheologicalreview.org/static/pdf/articles/Christi/pdf>

Phyllis Cole-Dai, *Poetry of Presence.* For a few years Phyllis offered a poem of mindfulness on each day. To access them: <http://www.ayearofbeinghere.com/p/mindfulness-poets.html>