

The Dark

In the dark
there is a gift
I might have missed
in the bright of day.

It is the slowing of time,
the sense of air
soft filling each space,
touching my face,
of self with no mask
or pretence,
no agenda,
no inner or outer pressure,
just silence so loud
I can hear it.

It is so empty, it is full.
I can feel all that is there,
all that is always there,
although I am not.

I can honour it
by doing nothing.

Jane Upchurch, unpublished, see Cana Newsletter, October 2021, [here](#).

Perfect Joy

Here is how I sum it up:

Heaven does nothing: its non-doing is its serenity.

Earth does nothing: its non-doing is its rest.

From the union of these two non-doings

All actions proceed,

All things are made.

How vast, how invisible

This coming-to-be!

All things come from nowhere!

How vast, how invisible

No way to explain it!

All beings in their perfection

Are born of non-doing.

Hence it is said:

"Heaven and earth do nothing

Yet there is nothing they do not do."

Where is the person who can attain

To this non-doing?

Chuang Tzu, translated by Thomas Merton.

In Roger Housden, *Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation* (Harmony Books, 2003), 146.

Dark

Malling Abbey Church

Here in the dark
do not speak.

 Only
listen, hold your peace
and wait for the wordless gift:
the lifting of the lark's voice,
choice and sweet,
repeating its high note of love,
speaking your name,
calling you over and over
again.

 Do not speak.
Let the visiting bird,
silence, do her work:
sift your heart,
heal what is broken,
sundered apart,
restore what is plundered,
repair the rift,
knit to one piece the unravelled mind,
scattered and split.

Wait for the gift,
the lifting of the warm,
beating wings,
the sudden shudder
under the brooding breast.

You must enter
here in the dark
where the heart sings.
Do not speak.

In Nicola Slee, *Praying Like a Woman*,
(London: SPCK, 2004), p43.

It is enough to listen to the silence

It is enough
to listen to the silence.
Silence comes to fetch us
where we have just been
with our thoughts and feelings.

It is enough
to listen to the silence.
Silence brings us
to where we are now,
right here,
into this room,
to this place,
this morning.

It is enough
to listen to the silence.
Silence embraces
what wants to become.
Whatever this day brings us,
is held,
and always has been,
in this silence
now.

It is enough
to listen to the silence.

In Silvia Ostertag, *Living Silence: Tuning in
and Practicing* (Beauchamp: Matador, 2013), 2.

The Womb of Silence

Not in the whirlwind,
not in the lightning,
not in the strife of tongues,
or in the jangling of subtle reasoning
is God to be found,
but in the still small voice
speaking in the womb of silence.
Therefore be silent.

Let the past be silent.
Let there be no vain regrets,
no brooding on past failures,
no bitterness,
no judgement of oneself
or of others.
Let all be silent.

Be still and know.
Be still and look.
Let the eyes of the mind be closed
that you may hear
what otherwise you would not hear,
that you may know
what otherwise you would not know.

Abandon yourself to God
in longing love, simply,
holding on to nothing but God.
So you may enter the silence of eternity
and know the union of yourself with God.
And if in the silence God does not answer,
God is still there.
God's silence is the silence of love.
Wait then in patience
and in submission.
It is good to wait in silence
for God's coming.

An unknown author, quoted in Benignus O'Rourke, *Finding Your Hidden Treasure: The Way of Silent Prayer* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010), 58–59.

Psalm 23 *Redux*

This I know:
My life is in your hands.
I have nothing to fear.

I stop,
breathe,
listen.

Beneath the whirl of what is
is a deep down quiet place.
You beckon me to tarry there.

This is the place
where unnamed hungers
are fed, the place
of clear water,
refreshment.

My senses stilled,
I drink deeply,
at home in timeless territory.

In peril, I remember:
Death's dark vale holds no menace.
I lean into You;
Your eternal presence comforts me.
I am held tenderly.

In the midst of all that troubles,
that threatens and diminishes,
You set abundance before me.
You lift my head; my vision clears.
The blessing cup overflows.

This I know:
You are my home and my hope,
my strength and my solace,
and so shall You ever be.

In Carla A. Grosch-Miller, *Psalms Redux: Poems and Prayers*,
(London: Canterbury Press, 2014), p13.

How to pray

an empty room
asks to be sat in
for a long time
at different hours of the day and night
in many weathers
alone without words

perhaps hold an object in your hands
 a stone
 a cup
 a length of beads
for a long time

or place something well chosen
on the floor or a window ledge
where you will look at it
for a long time

a cup a vase a stone
a piece of wood

without asking or telling anything
imposing your own shape on the emptiness
as lightly as possible

leave and enter
many times
without disturbing its silences

gradually over many years
a room thus entered and departed
will teach you how to furnish and dispose of
the paraphernalia of a life

Nicola Slee, in Gavin D'Costa, Eleanor Nesbitt, Mark Pryce,
Ruth Shelton and Nicola Slee, *Making Nothing Happen: Five Poets
Explore Faith and Spirituality*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p32.

Psalm 131 *Redux*

O Lord, my heart is open
and my mind is freed
from the struggle to make sense
even of who, of how, You are.

(I breathe.)

I come to the broad plain,
the fullness of silence,
to You.
Peace envelops me.
I sink into You.
I want for nothing.

(This is the still point
of the turning world.)

I rest in You.

(This is the beginning.
I am.)

In Carla A. Grosch-Miller, *Psalms Redux: Poems and Prayers*, (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), p82.

I think that maybe
I will be a little surer
of being a little nearer.
That's all. Eternity
is in the understanding
that that little is more than enough.

In R. S. Thomas, *Selected Poems*,
(London: Penguin, 2003), p229.

Clearing

Do not try to serve
the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create
a clearing
in the dense forest
of your life
and wait there
patiently,
until the song
that is yours alone to sing
falls into your open cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself
to the world
so worthy of rescue.

Martha Postlethwaite (published source unclear but will be credited once known).

Folk Tale

Prayers like gravel
 flung at the sky's
window, hoping to attract
 the loved one's
attention. But without
 visible plaits to let
down for the believer
 to climb up,
to what purpose open
 that far casement?
 I would
have refrained long since
 but that peering once
through my locked fingers
I thought that I detected
 the movement of a curtain.

In R. S. Thomas, *Selected Poems*,
(London: Penguin, 2003), p186.

From *Thoughts in Solitude*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

In Thomas Merton, *Dialogues with Silence: Prayers and Drawings*, (London: SPCK, 2002), pvii.

Let Your God Love You

Be silent.
Be still.
Alone,
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God
Look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
And understands.
God loves you with
An enormous love,
Wanting only to
Look upon you
With love

Quiet.
Still.
Be.

Let your God
Love you.

In Edwina Gateley, *There Was No Path So I Trod One*
(Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1996).