



Theme artwork by
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Lent at Lakeside: My Heart as Sanctuary My Life as Prayer Devotion for Wednesday, February 21, 2018

The Practice of His Presence* By Howard Thurman

Varied and rich are the methods used by individuals who have discovered the strength and the security that come from the practice of the Presence of God. Most often these practices are very private and are a part of the intimate resources of personal religious living. To talk about such things is like living one's private life in public. In the course of a lifetime a person may be privileged to share the testimony in most unexpected ways.

During the later years of her life, my mother spent a winter living in our home. Near the close of her visit I remarked on a particular Friday noon that she was not having lunch. She parried the comment, obviously throwing me off. This excited my curiosity, for it was unlike her not to be direct. After some moments of talking back and forth, it developed that it had been her habit for more than twenty years to fast every Friday, devoting as much time as possible to prayer and meditation. This had been going on for more than twenty years, and despite the fact that I had spent a part of each of those years with her, so undemonstrative had she been in her own private religious life that I was not even aware of the fasting—had no hint of it. I was deeply puzzled—and am still puzzled!—as to how she had managed it.

There is a friend who is in her seventies now. In her professional life she was a secretary. Each morning before she has her breakfast she sits at her typewriter and writes a letter to God. No one else ever sees what she writes. It is part of her own private communion with God.

There is another person well into the later years. For some months now she has been in uncertain health. Each morning when she awakes, she stops for a period of meditation. The phrase is the same each day: "This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it." At night, as she turns out the light over her bed, she says it a little differently because "rejoice" and "be glad" are not very restful words. She says, "This is the night which the Lord has made. I will rest and relax in it." One day she had a fall, but managed to pull herself up without calling for help. She was quite shaken and was in much pain. She prepared herself for bed and with much discomfort was able to get in beneath the covers. As she turned out the light, she said, "This is the night which the Lord has made. I will relax and cry in it." Then she realized what she had said, and her tears were all mixed with her laughter.

Varied and rich indeed are the methods used by individuals who have discovered the strength and serenity that come from the "practice of the Presence of God." What have you found needful for your peace?

*From *The Inward Journey*. Friends United Press: Richmond, IN, 1961, pages 131-21.

Psalm 77:1-15

I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.
I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints. *Selah*

You keep my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of long ago.
I commune with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:
"Will the Lord spurn for ever,
and never again be favorable?
Has his steadfast love ceased for ever?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?"
Selah

And I say, "It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
you have displayed your might among the peoples.
With your strong arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Prayer:

By Peggy Haymes

Our God, forgive us. We try to save the world by ourselves, ending up only tired and frustrated. We try to do everything, even that which you have not called us to do. Busy and fatigued and impatient, we are unable to respond when you do call us to action, for our schedules have become our excuses. Yet our pride keeps us from your rest and refreshment and guidance.

Forgive us, O Lord, and help us to see the good we should do, the time we should rest, the way we should trust. Grant to us endurance, patience, and wisdom. Amen.

—From *Be Thou Present: Prayers, Litanies, and Hymns for Christian Worship*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Macon: GA, 1993, pages 37-38.