

Christmas Message

December 2024

Dear brothers, sisters, siblings in Christ,

'Hush before the LORD God, for the day of the LORD is near!'

Zephaniah 1 v.7 (Common English Bible)

'Hush the noise' has been the theme of Advent resources for the Methodist Church this year and we've been invited to 'hear the angels love-song and join in.'

I did a quick Google search for 'John Wesley on silence' and discovered the following:

*'John Wesley ... believed that God waits for people to quiet themselves, as the world is full of noise and activity. Wesley believed that people are often rushed and hurried when they come to God, and that this makes it unlikely that they will hear God's voice. He also believed that people who are caught up in the noise of the world lose touch with their inner selves.'*

And, in contrast:

*'Stillness is not an easy concept in Methodism. John Wesley was distrustful of the 'doctrine of stillness' or Quietism, which he encountered in the Fetter Lane Society around 1740. This was the notion put forward by the Moravian preacher, Philip Molther, urging members to wait passively for the gift of faith and to abstain from the means of grace until they had received it ... Molther's view of stillness caused John Wesley to separate from the Fetter Lane Society and, despite some lines in Charles Wesley's hymns advocating waiting on God, the implicit ecclesiology forming in the 18th century fresh expression of Church called Methodism was activist.'*

I pray that you will be blessed with some moments of hush, some hush-time over this Christmas and New Year period. Not just the quiet after the storm in which we might be rested and restored following the extra busyness of the festive season, but also the deeper peace that comes from resting in God and restored by eternal divine love.

There is a stark and empty hush or silence associated with loss and trauma. Such as the absence of a loved one or the shock of terrible news and experience, the destruction after the bombs fall. Whilst this is reality for many of us, it is not the hush that I seek to bless you with.

In my own prayer I am finding that God speaks less and is quiet more. Fr Richard Rohr writes: 'Silence is the language of God, and the only language deep enough to absorb all the contradictions and failures that we are holding against ourselves. God loves us silently because God has no case to make against us. The silent communion absorbs our self-hatred, as every lover knows.' This is not absence but rather the promise and presence of Immanuel – God with us. God is love. You are loved and you are enough.

In his short commentary on Ephesians – 'Sit Walk Stand' - Watchman Nee offers us: '... Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE. Thus, Ephesians opens with the statement that God has 'blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (1.3) and we are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us ...'

And this is Good News, isn't it? 'Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious King! The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.'  
Happy Christmas and Every Blessing for the New Year.

Yours in Christ,  
Mark

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