

This fall I've been considering what is most important to me about God

First—that God loves me!

Last Sunday we talked about joy

Today I want to talk about the presence of God—that God is with us 24/7 all the time

I grew up in the Friends Church and knew all of this in one sense—but in reality I didn't get it

A couple of things...

One—I tried to be good and earn favor with God

Two—the relationship interaction was relegated to "prayer time"

I knew that God/Jesus was always there if I needed God

"...the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 NRSV

"...remember, I am with you always..." Matthew 28:20 NRSV

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 KJV

Child threw a ball—asked for help and got it—go back to heaven now

I always thought I should be more intentional in my praying without ceasing

But...

I tried to be diligent about my "devotions"—time set aside for God and the Bible

In the mid-1970s I hit a rough place—I don't remember the details, just that I was pretty down

Took a week's vacation from work and went camping alone

My purpose was to reconnect with God

It took several days to settle and be present

Delightful time in nature and I did reconnect with myself and with God

The thing I noticed when I came home—was that God was with me

It felt as if Jesus was my constant companion—standing beside me

That sense faded as I got busy with life—but it was an incredible sense of what's true

In the 1990s I was greatly impacted by something Bruce Bishop said

He talked about the constant struggle to do his daily devotions—which I resonated with

He recognized that his personality preferred hanging with people to short daily conversations

Therefore he decided to hang with Jesus—weekly at Tilikum on Wednesday mornings

That felt freeing to me—that there could be intentional time of just hanging with God/Jesus

That it was less of a regimented time

That there was more space for open ended conversations

It was less about me and more about God

In the late 1990s a friend of mine in Spokane came to Seattle wishing he could see a friend

My friend presided over this woman's wedding—now divorced and in Seattle, but where???

He expressed the wish to see her, but had no idea how to contact her

God's grace—his waitress in Issaquah was her mother

My friend said, "It would have been an answer to prayer, if I had prayed it"

I said, "It was an answer to prayer—your spirit prayed it for you with your yearnings"

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we

ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Romans 8:26 NRSV

As my brother was at the hospital with his son, just before he died, he sent an email...

I needed a little something go give me a boost this morning so I read in Philippians 4 the following: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and

*petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I liked what The Message version said in one part of this passage, "Let your petitions and praise shape your worries in to prayers." I'm not so much **feeling** the "peace of God" right now but am trying to shape my worries in to prayers.*

In addition, it is my sense that we don't have to "try" to shape worries into prayers
God does that for us—we simply come in truth and honesty before God—that is prayer

A number of years ago I was talking with a friend that was a new Christian
She had partnered up with another friend as prayer partners—but was struggling to pray aloud
She was fine with the talking to God by herself part
She asked me about it as we were driving—she was taking me home after my car died
I asked if she was trying to model it after the prayers the pastor and I did during worship—yes!
I explained that those were more pastoral prayers and that if it was the 2 of us—I'd just talk
Then I launched into a much more casual prayer—thankful for the ride home, etc.
I said it is much more like a conversation with a friend—a Divine Friend

Another thing is this bowing your head and closing your eyes thing...
I do it out of habit and expectation—but it isn't necessary!
First encountered this with Jan when she was still living in Ohio and we were at a conference
Sitting at a table over lunch or coffee, talking, and Jan shifted into prayer without pausing
No—let's pray about this and bowing our heads and doing intentional prayer
Wow—it was as if Jesus was part of that conversation—Jan acknowledged it by speaking to him

I have come to see God as present with me all the time—a Divine Presence
I'm not careful about the distinction between God—Jesus—Spirit
Nor were early Quakers so I'm in good company
Don't worry if your language or sense changes—just go with it
We talk about everything all the time—even non-spiritual stuff
We hang together 24/7

Mind the Light!—Mark Oppenlander talks about minding the light when doing theater
The actor needs to be aware of where the light is and stay with their face in the light
Actors often say, "mind the light" as a way of reminding each other to be aware
It seems to me that we should do the same in minding the Light of Christ

Inner Light, Inner Witness, Voice Within—use whatever metaphor works for you
Brother Lawrence talked about "Practicing the Presence"
He set his watch as a reminder to practice focusing on the Presence of God

God is with us always!! – Accompaniment

We live out the heart of God through - Ministry of presence or being Jesus with skin on
Ministry of accompaniment