

George Fox, who helped English language-speakers and spiritual seekers of the 1600 to find what developed into Quakerism wrote in a letter, “Dwell in the cool, sweet, holy power of God...Dwell in the endless power of the Lord...that hath the wisdom which is sweet and cool and pure.” A message for these cooling days.

Our first hymn is red #177, “Awake, Awake to Love and Work”

Our first reading is **Psalm 90**

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

1Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

2Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3You turn people back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”

4A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

5Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning:

6In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered.

7We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.

8You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

9All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.

10Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,

for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

11If only we knew the power of your anger!
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.

12Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

13Relent, Lord! How long will it be?
Have compassion on your servants.

14Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

15Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.

16May your deeds be shown to your servants,
your splendor to their children.

17May the beauty of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands.

A second reading comes from Saint Anselm who lived from 1033 to 1109: “Cast aside, now, they burdensome cares and put away thy toilsome business. Yield room for some little time to God.”

And finally, from Thomas Kelly in his 1941 book, *A Testament of Devotion* “It is an overwhelming experience to fall into the hands of the living God, to be invaded to the depths of one’s feelings by God’s presence, to be without warning, wholly uprooted from all earthborn securities and assurances, and to be blown by a tempest of unbelievable power which leaves one’s old proud self utterly, utterly defenseless, until one cries, “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” Then is the soul swept into a loving center of ineffable sweetness, where calm and unspeakable peace and ravishing joy steal over one.”

Our second hymn is green #179 “There is a Balm in Gilead”

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—We pray for shelter in the storm, for deliverance from the consuming fires. Help us love and know this poor little earth, and to fully know that the earth is the Lord's, not ours. Give us consolation in the coolness and sweetness of the Spirit, in the insights of one another, in the restful quiet of the moonlit nights of autumn. Kindle in us the embers of love, the lights of hope, the warmth of renewal. We are thankful for this gathering, for the soothing balm of friendship and fellowship, for having traveling companions along the way. As we climb through this beautiful glen of life, lighten our burdens, give wing to our thoughts, let our hearts soar, that we shall know God. Amen.

Our third hymn is red book #255 “Let There Be Light”

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other.

Message: Dear Friends, Psalm 90 that I read today is a bit of a harsh psalm at first reading, speaking of the ephemeral nature of human life and attributing it to God's anger. As the psalm of Moses, the forty years wandering in the wilderness may come as some explanation for this tone, and yet the psalm is framed in great beauty of the positive declaration that we all dwell eternally in the sacred, and that we successfully may accomplish God's will, and that our work and plans and efforts will be blessed, will be part of the eternal beauty of the sacred. In the psalm, there is the prayer to learn from life in verse 12 “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom” and to learn from love in verse 14 “Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.” The back and forth of the psalm, from the crisis of God's anger to the blessing of intention is striking. It makes me think of it as a psalm of climate change. If this earth is a sacred dwelling place, then certainly in our greed and careless consumption we have triggered earth's own judgment on our futures. Perhaps you saw or read about Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez's inspiring speech before the World Mayors Summit on climate in Denmark in the past few days and how it electrified the gathering as she lamented the conditions in her native Puerto Rico and she spoke emotionally of both her dreams and her hesitancy at possibly becoming a mother at this time in the condition of the earth. The judgment and inevitability of retribution in the psalm may reflect the ways that the earth and its natural systems may deal with us in its changing climate. The earth will not miss us. Where we will be missed and where we can be redeemed is in Spirit, in taking seriously and fully connecting with the sacred beyond greed and economics and historical processes and expectations. We can pause and be fully intentional, we can number our days, measure them out instead of just letting them go by, and so accumulate wisdom in deliberate and sequenced ways through shared experience of the divine and of life and love itself. We pray, in the final verses of the psalm, that our efforts to begin anew, to work aright, will be blessed in beauty and will endure.

This idea of God as a refuge is not meant as a hideaway, but as the cooling shade in the desert, or the shelter from the storm. As George Fox describes it, "the cool, sweet, holy power of God". He also lived in chaotic times of revolution and inflamed colonialism, new wealth and tremendous inequality. A Europe that had burned all of its wood and had been changing its relation to religion, when old forms of religion had been discredited. Finding relief in an age of anxiety, conflict, and instability is not escape, but care. These are situations that cannot be handled alone, nor just with logic or basic individual advice. Our connections and collective wisdom, our congregation has, in Spirit, a broader transcendental connection where, as Thomas Kelly describes "the soul (is) swept into a loving center of ineffable sweetness, where calm and unspeakable peace and ravishing joy steal over one." Where our temporal lives are linked to the eternal. We need to have the humility, when lost, to ask for the direction we need, not only to find the path, but to find one another, seekers like us.

One of our ongoing challenges as a religious community today lies in how to remain faithful and relevant in a secular age, in a time of increasing materialism and commodification, where everything seems to have a cost and a price in minutes or dollars, and if it doesn't, then it is presumed to have little or no worth. In the academic world where I spend much of my time, it is the ongoing abandonment of the humanities, the philosophy and literature of meaning and understanding, the art of theater, dance, music, and display, the interpretive use of languages and representation to delight and reveal. Have we become afraid of the profound, or is it that it makes us feel guilty or inadequate in the world of the present? How do we not have time to sit and talk, explore and be? Every conversation need not be deep, but at least some of them must be so in order to keep our hearts open and growing, our lives meaningful and connected, our minds limber and expansive. Morality is complex and needs discernment, is ever changing and needs navigation, and within that finding of direction, the compass or fixed point that keeps us from an ungrounded relativism comes from collective and historic wisdom, as well as the deep sense of the Light Within.

Last night, Craig and I saw the Auburn production of "The Laramie Project", about the time, twenty-one years ago when Matthew Shepherd, a gay college student, died on October 12th at the age of twenty one after a cruel and severe beating. For some reason, that death, out of the many thousands gone, resonated, stirred the spirit, changed the world. In the art of that drama, it continues to do so. Greta Thunberg touches and moves the world in another way today in her youth and truth-speaking and neuro-difference. The child of an ethnically mixed and religiously mixed, Muslim/Christian marriage, a soldier with a doctorate in Peace Studies, becomes a leader of peace in Ethiopia and the region. Light shines in our times. It does not shine in the things and worries, the schedules and the ambitions, but rather in the collective moments where hearts are touched, when time is

suspended and the everyday is, however briefly, outshone. The ephemeral nature of our lives may discourage and concern us, may lead us to try to hoard or gain the upper hand, but if we can let the Truth of life sink in and not sit alone in sorrow, but rather look to one another for that of God, and dwell in the everlasting, in Love, each day will have its joy.

Closing hymn is green #255 “Valiant for the Truth”

May the beauty of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands.