

will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended. *Isaiah 51:1-6*

The nearness of silence means also a nearness of forgiveness and the nearness of love, for the natural basis of forgiveness and of love is silence. It is important that this natural basis should be there, for it means that forgiveness and love do not have first to create the medium in which they appear. *Max Picard*

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The Benefice of Glastonbury with Meare

Holding on to the Silence

Advent

2018

Weekly Collect and Daily Readings from Sunday 9 December - Saturday 15 December

Collect for Sunday 9 - Saturday 15 December:

God our hope, whose arrival proclaims good news to the oppressed and liberty to captives: prepare our hearts to welcome your coming in power and in the tender compassion your love, that with a lively and discerning spirit we may reach out to our troubled world; through Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

Daily Readings:

Sunday 9 December

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely . . . Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. *Psalms 139:1-4,6*

From rushing round to stillness, Lord, I come. From being pulled in all directions to the simplicity of this moment, Lord I come. Help me to realign my will with your will and my spirit to your Spirit, as I reach out to you in the silence. *Angela Ashwin*

Monday 10 December

A voice says, 'Cry out!' and I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep. *Isaiah 40:6-11*

Dialogue must begin, first of all, within oneself. If we cannot make peace within how can we hope to bring about peace in the world? *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Tuesday 11 December

Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. *Ezekiel 17:17-20*

[Silence] makes things whole again, by taking them back from the world of dissipation into the world of wholeness. It gives things something of its own holy uselessness, for that is what silence itself is: holy usefulness. *Max Picard*

Wednesday 12 December

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. *Malachi 3:1-4*

Every one of us forms an idea of Christ that is limited and incomplete. It is cut according to our measure. We tend to create for ourselves a Christ in our own image, a projection of our own aspirations, desires and ideals. We find in Him what we want to find. We make Him not only the incarnation of God but also the incarnation of the things we and our society and our part of society happen to live for. *Thomas Merton*

Thursday 13 December

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the

Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall be acceptable on my altar, and I will glorify my glorious house. *Isaiah 60:1-7*

Sometimes it may seem to us that there is no purpose in our lives, that going day after day for years to this office or that school or factory is nothing else but waste and weariness. But it may be that God has sent us there because but for us Christ would not be there. If our being there means that Christ is there, that alone makes it worthwhile. *Caryll Houselander*

Friday 14 December

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' But I said, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God.'

And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength – he says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, 'Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.' *Isaiah 49:1-7*

It's when we face for a moment the worst our kind can do, and shudder to know the taint in our own selves, that awe cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart: not to a flower, not to a dolphin, to no innocent form but to this creature vainly sure it and no other is god-like, God (out of compassion for our ugly failure to evolve) entrusts, as guest, as brother, the Word.

Denise Levertov, On the Mystery of the Incarnation

Saturday 15 December

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. For the Lord