

Prayer and Joy



What is interesting is the feeling I get in the morning, when I anticipate a day of painting. I feel exhilarated - it is a joy. When I recognize that this is my prayer, and in prayer, there is joy, I begin to understand more of what my life-course needs to be. Making is the way that I know God's presence in my life.

Where do you know joy in your life? As with everything god-wise, it may well be in the everyday stuff wherein you spend your time. Or it may be in those exceptional moments when you step out of the ordinary into something more. My experience tells me that joy is most often something that is incarnate; joy and bodies just go together. Maybe joy is in your body when you go for a run or a walk. Perhaps joy is in your body when you dance or sing. Maybe joy is in your body when, like me, your hands are at work making beauty.

All of these experiences are just another way of talking about prayer. Too often, I've thought of prayer in the same way I thought of self-improvement; it's something that I have to do in order to be a better person. And, every time that I think of prayer in these terms the joy just sort of drains away. There is a scandalous impracticality to prayer – just as there is with joy.



What blocks joy in my life – what blocks prayer too – is the kind of frustrating experience of not knowing how to get to where I want to be. It's like the time that I tried to build a harpsichord. I had the desire, I even had some of the skill, but I didn't have the time or the energy or the real expertise to take on such a challenging project. So I ended up feeling frustrated and defeated. In my life of prayer, I have to give up on any sort of finished project or best outcome

and just show up to the task. If prayer begins to feel daunting to me, I relax and let my prayer rest. All along it is showing up that matters, not the finished product that matters.



In joy, as in prayer, I rely on the energy of God to continually kindle in me the warmth of divine light. When I feel frustrated in joy (or prayer) I simply have to confess that I am not up to the task and that the Spirit of God in me is the engine that moves me forward. Turning away from the false promises of the ego and turning toward the generosity of God works in me to keep joy alive.

The invitation today is to pay attention to joy and to see if the energy of that joy (aka the Holy Spirit) is leading you more deeply into joy.

Grace & Peace
Paul