

PRAYER: Help us, Our Father, to become master of ourselves so that we may become the servants of others. Take our lips and speak through them. Our minds and think through them. And take our hearts, and set them on fire. Amen.

THE SILENCE OF ETERNITY

Silence may indicate the poverty stricken mind which has nothing to say, or on the other hand, it may speak of the composed receptiveness of alert faculties...

Silence may result from the confused embarrassment of a muddled brain, or on the other hand, it may be the dramatic source of power of a master of audiences...

There's the silence of the schoolboy who has forgotten his piece, and the silence of a great actor as he walks about on the stage without uttering a syllable...

There's the awkward pause when no one can think of a thing to say, and on the other hand, there is the silent hush of admiration for a speaker's eloquence...

Unembarrassed silence...

Silence that is creative and productive....

Such silences mean that we have passed the portals of the superficial and entered into the deeper experiences of life. It was Carlyle who said:

"Silence is the element in which
great things fashion themselves
together. Speech is of
Time. Silence is of Eternity.

There is the passive, dead silence, as well as the endless prattle in which small minds must always indulge. However, Carlyle is speaking of the great creative silences....

The silence of the majestic forest.....

The silence of the endless sea.....

The silence of the rugged mountain peak....

But these are far removed from the everyday life of most of us. We find

ourselves bombarded by confusion, noise and sound from morning till night. And even when we have retreated from the noise of the street to the quietness of the home, we reach out into the invisible waves about us for the voices that will save us from the dread calamity of stillness. Surely, in such a boisterous and noisy environment as ours, it is the peculiar mission of the church to cultivate the silence where we may come and hear, "the still small voice of calm."

THE SILENCE OF WAITING
BEFORE GOD.

Silence ought not to be a Quaker practice only, for it brings us many of the high moments of religious insight. There is, first of all, the silence of waiting before God. The realization of the presence of God does not come to the person who is preoccupied with things. Rather it comes to the person who actively and creatively prepares his mind for waiting on him. As the poet has so well reminded us:

"'Tis not in seeking,
Tis not in endless striving
Thy quest is found;
Be still and listen,
Be still and drink the quiet
Of all around....."

God is seldom noisy. God does his work in silence. God speaks to us in whispers.

Buried beneath the ancient city of Shechem is said to be a river of running water which makes a soft murmur. During the day, because of the noise of the traffic and the cries of hucksters in the bazaars, it cannot be heard. But when the sound of tramping feet and bargaining voices dies away at evening, the rippling of the concealed stream is easily heard. LIKE the music of the hidden water is the voice of God. It comes and goes unnoticed amid the shouts of the market place and the clang of machines, but it is readily heard by those who seek the quiet seclusion of the Sanctuary.

The God we worship is not a pagan deity who is deaf and must be awakened. We wait quietly for the mysterious touch of the spirit of God. It is not better ideas about God that will make him real to us. It is in periods of expectant silence in which the way is made straight for his coming.

It was Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic, who once wrote:

"The Eternal Father has spoken one word which is the Son, and he speaks it still in an eternal silence; the soul must listen to it in a like silence."

THE SILENCE OF
FACING GOD.

There is the silence of waiting before God.

There is also the silence which comes to every
humble spirit as he actually faces God.

During the French Revolution, a lawless mob broke into the palace of the king. Bent on loot and destruction, they rushed down a long corridor and into the room beyond it. Hanging on the opposite wall was a painting of Jesus on the cross. Suddenly the marauders were brought face to face with the face of Jesus.....

The spirit of the mob was broken.....

Everyone became silent.....

Some of those in front knelt in prayer...

Many reverently removed their hats.....

Some near the door turned and quietly left the room.

Then one of the leaders went forward, turned the picture of Jesus toward the wall, and yelled to the mob to continue its plundering.

In like manner, when we come face to face with God in the great spiritual moments of life, we find our words and phrases so inadequate. Silently our spirits are captured by his spirit. Before him we stand and silence alone befits the awe which is inspired within us.

The Hebrew prophet said:

"The Lord is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before him."

THE SILENCE OF COMMON

There is the silence of waiting before God.

UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL

There is the silence of facing God.

APPRECIATION.

There is also another silence which many

people in life have experienced, and that

is the silence which grows out of common understanding and mutual love and appreciation. It is the silence that is part of a deep and meaningful relationship between two people who love and understand each other.

Grief and tragedy may strike the heart of a person. In the moment of need, he seeks the close, dear friend who with an understanding look, or a firm handclasp, or an arm around the shoulder **PIERCES BEYOND WHAT** words can utter to the deeper feelings that escape verbal expression. This golden silence accompanies perfect understanding and mutual appreciation. Such experiences utilize language, but the rarest moments are in the silent hours where the hush is too holy to be interrupted by profane chatter.

If silence is the sacrament of human love, it is no less the medium of communion with God.

"I have called you not servants
but friends....." speaks the word
of God.....

We may share that friendship in whatever language is natural, but its holiest and deepest hours will call for silence. Unto that would the poet Longfellow lead us:

"Let us, then labor for an inward stillness ---
An inward stillness and an inward healing;
That perfect silence, where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait
in singleness of heart, that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits
that we may do his will, and do that only."

We are not met this morning to offer words in tribute to silence...

we are here to be still and to know God...

In silence....we wait for his coming unto us...

we bow before his presence...

we commune with him....

It is not easy to be still....even for a few moments, not knowing the work of the week, or the problems that are facing us.

It is not easy to be still....with all of life's pressures and anxieties constantly pushing in on us.....

ONLY TO BE STILL AND TO KNOW GOD.

To know his gracious kindness and the beauty of his holiness...

To know the calm of his presence, and the joy of his friendship...

To know, NOT because someone is telling us things about which he has heard or read, but because in the quiet stillness of his place, God's spirit is at work in our hearts.

In a few minutes, we shall sing a hymn that we have sung many times before. we shall read paragraphs and prayers that will present no novel ideas, nor offer any new information.

They are words which will be but vain repetitions unless they lead up to moments of creative silence.

These words of mine are simply reminders of what language cannot convey. They are but an invitation to join in this act of silence leading into the holy place of communion with God.

"Be still and know
that God is in the world;
God speaks, but none may hear
that voice except he have the listening ear..."

LET US PRAY:

Help us our rather to have that listening ear. May we hear Thy voice speak to us in these moments of holy communion. help us to grow in our knowledge of Thee, and to make thee the dearest friend of all. In thy name we pray. Amen.

I WISH TO EXPRESS TO YOU
OUR GREAT HAPPINESS IN
COMING TO YOU TODAY.

WE APPRECIATE THE MANY
THOUGHTFUL PREPARATIONS
THAT HAVE BEEN MADE —

THE WARMTH, & FRIENDLINESS
OF THOSE WE HAVE MET
THUS FAR, HAS CERTAINLY
MADE US FEEL AT HOME.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE
DAYS & MONTHS AHEAD WITH
GREAT ANTICIPATION —

PSALM: 130.

OR.

~~MATTHEW.~~

(LUKE 22: 14-24)