



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

CANADIAN MEMORIAL CHURCH
& CENTRE FOR PEACE

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Psalm 84

August 23, 2009

12th Sunday after Pentecost

Home in the Heart of God

“Practicing the Presence” by Joel Goldsmith

Today’s Heart focus in our month on “Kin-dom of the Heart” is on that space – not in the form of time and space - but that place in consciousness that we truly rest, knowing our union with the Divine.

We are pilgrims of life, wandering here and there, experiencing the joys and the sorrows of human living. At times our lives feel like Baca, a barren place in the wilderness. At other times we are in the springs of Life itself, with the water overflowing with its life-giving grace.

In our reading today from Psalm 84, we could conclude that the “dwelling place” is a temple to which many wander to find refuge. “Truly a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.” I know that there have been many phases of my life that I have felt like a gypsy, wandering here or there, searching, seeking, for the temple of God, this divine dwelling place, OUT THERE, and yet ending up tired, parched and disappointed, not finding this Holy Place. When I finally woke up and remembered the “courts” of the Divine is within me, that the most Holy Place is a space which I must cultivate within, then and only then, could I have my day in the High Court of my consciousness that might replenish me for a thousand other days within the realm of human living.

This divine dwelling place is the Heart of God. Whenever we experience the ecstasy of divine communion, or even the still small voice that visits as we are in quiet contemplation, we have found our Home. The booming voice of God in our clear insights and intuitions and the quiet whisper of Spirit’s alluring voice, are calling us Home.

Where do we feel most at home? In my first few months here in 2006, I stayed in 6 different places. I was disoriented, frazzled and off-centre. My rhythm for spiritual practice was off as well. I did not feel at home anywhere. Only when I created the time to find sanctuary in the communion with Spirit, was I able to ground myself and know that I was home – in the Heart of God. And only then could I approach my life and my housing from a centered space grounded in Spirit.

Why is it that when we most need to rest in God that we activate the busyness of human experience with full throttle? What is mechanism within us to avoid that which we need the most? A trip to the gym or a yoga class seems too overwhelming; a few moments of meditation can’t get crammed into a full schedule; a quick call to a prayer partner or spiritual practitioner just slips from our minds as we go on to the next task at

hand. We find ourselves in the barren land of urban living, parched and hungry, longing for deep rest and replenishment.

For some of us we find the sanctuary we seek in this church, in spiritual community, in the temple of the Holy One. For others, including us at different times, we find it in the beautiful forests of our dear city, or on the sprawling beaches along the waterways and inlets. What if we could know, in all moments, that we move and breathe and have our being in the Heart of God? What if we could stop, look around, feel inside and know, deeply know, we are home? The grace of God is the container in which we live. There is no THERE to which we must journey to be in the Heart of God. It is HERE. NOW. ALWAYS.

What does it mean to be in the dwelling place of God? If God is everywhere present, aren't we always in this divine dwelling place? It is a matter of consciousness, a matter of the heart. We can live each moment, thinking we are separate, believing ourselves to be alone; this is hell on earth, a hell we have created in our own consciousness. Whenever we choose to believe we are separate from our God, separate from God, we experience a deep and profound loss -- of joy, of hope, of our sense of self. There are times when we can go days, weeks, months or even years in this state of separation, with a longing – conscious or unconscious, still lurking in the depth of our being. This longing is the seed within that knows the Truth, the seed of Wisdom whispering her message, waking us up, and calling us home.

In our second reading today, Joel Goldsmith speaks to this in his

meditation. We can temporarily believe we are separate from God, but that does not mean God is not present, always.

I will never leave you. I will be manna to you in the desert experience.

I will be that which opens the Red Sea for you, if no other way opens.

I AM THAT which I AM, forever and forever.

I have been That unto eternity and will be That for I am in the midst of you.

Whithersoever thou goest, I will go.

We can find comfort that wherever we go, there God is. Always; forever. Nothing can separate us from Spirit. Nothing except our thoughts or beliefs that we are separate, that we are alone. And those moments come. And they will pass – in just the moment we make a choice to become still, to centre ourselves and re-activate the awareness that we are immersed in, and infused with, the divine energy that illuminates all creation. God is our centre-pointe – the ground of our being in which we make our home, if we so choose.

At the Asilomar conference I recently attended, Dr. Kathy Hearn, the Community Spiritual Leader of United Centers for Spiritual Living, spoke to the realities of life in today's world. We can sometimes feel like we are on a merry-go-round, the little old-fashioned kind, like the ones in children's playgrounds. Do you remember the ones that had railings to hold onto and a centre pole? Some of us would hold onto the outside, enjoying the thrill of the centrifugal force that would whip us outward, throwing us off balance, and at times throwing us off the merry-go-round. For others, the calm in the centre was much preferred, watching

life swirl around before our eyes and not being thrown off by force or the speed of the movement.

What a wonderful analogy for the choice we get to make each day. Do we find our centre-point in God – allowing the chaos of life to simply move around and around and not throw us off, or do we choose the thrill of riding on the edge, in the storms and drama of life? Where do we find our centre? Do we have the capacity to truly rest in God, the centre-point of our being, and go un-affected by the chaos of life as it spins around us?

If we are always in the Heart of God, the ground of all being, then it is a practice of awareness that must be cultivated in order to know this and be blessed by this very fact. What are ways we can rest in the Heart of God? Some are similar to the ways of cultivating a relationship with Wisdom from last week – immersing ourselves in spiritual readings, meditation, and prayer. We can add also the evolutionary practice of tuning into an expanded awareness of our bodies – our gross, our subtle and our causal bodies.

We can ground ourselves through a deep body scan, becoming aware of the physical aspects of our body – our limbs, our organs, our skin, our hair. Through deep relaxation we can notice and honour the beauty that is our physical being. In this state, we are awake and aware of the material world, inside our bodies and around us.

We then expand our awareness to our subtle or energetic bodies, the seat of our emotions and the images and experiences of our dreams. This energetic

body radiates out from us like a wave from the ocean, always connected, yet freer and more fluid. As we move into the lucid awareness of our subtle energies, we begin to have a sense that we are much more than our physical bodies.

From this expanded state of awareness, we loosen our consciousness to become aware of the ground of all being, within which we move and have our being. We are unbounded, wide-open, present, with a sense of vastness and spacelessness. This is the you that was you before you were born, the ever-present Witness consciousness. It is the Allness, the Suchness that surrounds us and enfolds us, in which all our experiences arise.

As we become more awake and aware of the expanded version of ourselves, we are in an open place to fully rest in the Heart of God. Our whole body – gross, subtle and causal, can move into total awareness of our union with the Divine. We are able to experience a deeper sense of surrender – to find sanctuary, deep Sabbath in God. With each and every moment, each and every situation of our lives, we are called again and again to turn it over to God. Like the little swallow, we can make our nests, our home, in the altars of the divine in our consciousness. As we nestle in, we find comfort and ease like we've never experienced before. We are home in our lives, in our bodies; we are home in the Heart of God.

When I was in Russian supporting a church conference about 1000 miles east of Moscow, I had a profound experience that has stayed with me since 2002. One of the activities we did during a workshop is a Trust fall. Now this was not just a

typical trust fall where you stand with your feet on the ground and simply fall back into your partner's arms whom is just a foot or two away. This was staged on a platform up about meter high, and below were people from around the world, mostly Russians, who did not speak English.

Being an visiting American, it crossed my mind that not so long ago these people would have been considered our "enemies" – the "axis of evil" by the government and the culture of the country of which I am a citizen. Now they had become our dear friends, and to fall, I mean really fall, into the arms of these Russians was like falling into the arms of God. There was such deep love and trust that permeated this entire experience. For me, whenever I am unable, or unwilling, to truly surrender into the arms of the Divine, I simply recall this experience, knowing I am loved and cared for, deeply, and am safe to just fall, allowing the arms of God to catch me.

How lovely is this dwelling place –
Home in the Heart of God.

Let this be our prayer: when we lose our way, may we tune-in to the ever-present grace of God, and find the place within that is Home, Home in the Heart of God. I surrender fully into the Heart of God. I am at Peace.