

Reflection 28th May 2020

Reflection for today from Reader Roy: **Sabbath rest**

In a famous poem by Wordsworth he writes 'the world is too much with us, late and soon, getting and spending we lay waste our powers: little we see in Nature that is ours'. A few lines later he says 'For this, for everything we are out of tune; It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be a pagan suckled in a creed outworn'.

Wordsworth has clear terms of reference – belief in God or wasting ourselves in a busy world which to him is a pagan exercise. I can't help feeling attracted to his world – a world of peace and harmony and an awareness of God seen in the world of nature all around. Of course, Wordsworth lived in the Lake District before the coming of the railways. I can't see Wordsworth being able to cope in our world now – shopping in crowded supermarkets or driving round the M25!

I wonder how much peace there is in our society today. Where are people looking for peace?

The idea of a place of peace and rest runs through the Old Testament. It is captured in the hope of arriving in the promised land. Deuteronomy 12.9,10 says, 'you have not as yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you'. The promised land was to be a place of rest and a permanent home for the people of God where they could worship him and live by his law without distraction. The 'rest' in the land is associated with the deliverance from enemies.

Joshua 23.1 refers to the time after the conquest - 'the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies roundabout'. The idea of rest is also associated with the practice of just 'relaxing' in the promises of God rather than all our human exertions. Isaiah 30.15 says 'In returning and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and trust shall be your strength'.

The same idea of rest occurs in Ecclesiastes and is put forward as the opposite to the 'striving after wind' which is the activity of those who do not acknowledge God. Possibly we could say this is what Wordsworth noticed. Ecclesiastes 4.6 says 'Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind'. But as we know the scripture tells us that not everyone got to the promised land. Moses is the notable example.

In Hebrews chapter 11 the writer is cataloguing the great men and women of faith. In verse 13 the writer refers to those who died in the faith 'having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth' and verse 16 says 'But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one'. We too have to acknowledge that we do not belong to this world's system. On our journey we are able to find rest and peace as we continue our walk with God.

Philippians 4.7 says 'And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus'. This means that God will guard our hearts and minds. Saint Augustine's famous comment is 'our hearts are restless until we find our rest in thee'. We are already wrapped in God's peace, so relax and remember the prospect of a 'better country' for it says in Hebrews 4.9 'there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God'