

When we think of the life of God we have an enormous job to prescind from many of our human conclusions about human life and how to live it. It is our glory as well as our curse that we each only have a limited grasp on reality, based on our limited share of being. Much of what we say of God is made of statements releasing him from our limitations: we are little, and God is all; we are bound by time, God is free in eternity; we are constricted in low and particular places, God is uncontained in any boundaries.

What we find lovable in each other is precisely that individuality, that irreplaceable selfhood, which is formed of limitations and determinations, making you the person you are and no other. That a God who is, in the old phrase, “infinite in all perfections” should choose to create such beings as we are is a profound mystery. That he chooses to love us in our limited variety is an endless source of delight, in which we find our own nature swept up into the greatness of divine life and freedom. The joy of love is in its freedom; even if it constrains and impels us; it cannot be subjected to any other power.

In our experience of time we find the same opposition: it is time that is killing us, that is running out on us. But it makes life precious just because it is finite. *This moment* will never return, and must be lived in whatever depth and meaning and beauty we can find in it. If we find it, or indeed much of our time, a barren promontory, with nothing fruitful to be said of it, then we shall damn our life moment by moment. If we find the instant we now live to be bursting into springs of living water, we shall save our life for eternity moment by moment.

But finite creatures, who cannot bear very much reality at once, have the experience of weariness. Jakob von Wolf and Lukas going to bed....When I was a child, and guests arrived, we used to fall silent at seven-thirty, hoping no-one would notice we were still up and about. If our parents were absorbed in their guests, we would sometimes be discovered, white-faced and nearly fainting with tiredness, listening to conversation and pretending we weren't there. We thought being sent to bed was like banishment, and the nature of falling asleep as “a little death” was very clear to us even as young children. This is not the rest of which Jesus speaks in today's Gospel. *The rest of God* is not a weariness taking over the fulness of life and consciousness. God doesn't have even *little* deaths. Instead, we should think of a *fulness* of enjoyment *to which nothing can be added*. This belongs to God in eternity, and it is therefore (*pace* Genesis) not a state God passes in and out of, as we need to do because of our weariness. It is instead something into which God can welcome us, and promises to welcome us; it is the true Promised Land, which flows with milk and honey, and fulfils all the impotent desire that makes us restless on earth. It is surely to this rest that Jesus wanted to repair when he rose early and went off to pray, or when he escaped the crowds and their own multitudinous demands, in order to rest in the fulness of the Father's house.

Come to me all you who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Not sleep: not unconsciousness: but an easy learning, a sudden turning of our burdens into play, a lightness and joy of being which exults in the total revelation of the love of the Father.