

Psalm 37:1-11 Don't Fret!

Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
Be still before the LORD
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.
For those who are evil will be destroyed,
but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.
A little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look for them, they will not be found.
But the meek will inherit the land
and enjoy peace and prosperity.

There are a number of hymns that tell us to 'be still' — and the above passage, and Psalm 46:10 "be still and know that I am God"

What do you hear in those words, 'be still'?

A game of musical statues — how still do I need to be? Or perhaps you think, '*how* can I be still? There's so much to do!'

This stillness isn't passivity. It's not 'stop it, you don't know what you're doing, let me handle this'. God is an enabler, not a disenfranchiser.

It is not about outer quietness, though that can help. It is about paying attention. Nor is it two instructions, 'do this *and* do that'. But: 'be still, *in order to know that* I am God'. It is willingness to listen. Be calm and believe. Be still and know.

When Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus his heart was still and he too could walk on the water. When he looked at the water he sank! 'Be still and know that I am God', says the Lord. Paying attention to God is powerful!

Richard Foster's book, 'Prayer', has a story about Jim, who went on a private guided retreat. The guide gave Jim the task of meditating on the Annunciation in the first chapter of Luke. Jim went away and studied, and had lots of notes after the first day. The guide was unimpressed. He didn't want a sermon, he wanted Jim to experience God.

Jim set to study on the same passage for a second day, and thought he would die of boredom. He despaired! On day three the guide said this — 'You're trying too hard. You're trying to control God. Go back to this passage and this time be open to receive whatever God has for you. Don't manipulate God; just receive. Communion with him isn't something you institute. It's like sleep. You can't make yourself sleep, but you can create the conditions that allow sleep to happen. All I want you to do is create the conditions: open your Bible, read it slowly, listen to it and reflect on it.'

This time Jim had a profound, important, meaningful encounter with God.

I haven't expounded the psalm at the top at all. Do you have time? Good. Read it again slowly. Ruminant. Go back to the line that grabbed your attention. Read the whole thing again. Be still. Let God talk to you, and then, when you have slowed down, chat to God.

For some this may not be easy. But it is worth it.

SDG.