

Third Meditation

Julian of Norwich

Let us pray...

As truly as God is our Father...so truly

Is God our Mother?

What...do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing?

Know it well...for love was His meaning.

Who reveals it to you? Love.

What did He reveal to you? Love

Why does He reveal it to you? *For Love.*

Amen

If I am to be honest with myself, with you and most especially, with God, then I have to admit that at this point in my life, my faith and my priesthood I still don't understand why Jesus had to die up on that cross.

Yes...I've studied many of the theologies of the cross...

I've read a great number of books. I've attended church...most of my life. I've spent years in discernment and several at seminary in deep study.

But I don't think Jesus' death upon the cross has anything to do with our trying to solve a puzzle or get to an answer... at least not one that we can make sense of.

I mean...I can understand how he could be "placed" upon the cross...

I understand how people would have felt threatened by him and would want him gone and out of the way...

But it is still a mystery to me as to why he was put in the position of **dying** on our behalf.

But then...I am not a parent.

And parents, spouses and children say goodbye everyday to the people they love most...knowing they are sending them off to stand in between us and death.

And they do it bravely...prayerfully...and with great humility.

May God bless them all.

Thinking of these military families and their courageous faith is the closest I can come to somehow understanding God's depth of love for us.

This analogy of "sacrifice" is not my support of war.

It is merely ***my best attempt*** to grasp the smallest thread of understanding as to what it means to hand over what would be most precious to me in hope of it giving life to something...someone...greater than myself.

And there are no guarantees...of that.

In my personal struggle for meaning I look to Julian of Norwich. A theologian and mystic of the late 14th century England.

Her courageous 16 "showings" or "revelations" of God are both ancient and contemporary. They offer a vivid display of experiential theology. An opening to an approach of the soul few followers have the mindset to enter.

She shares not only her certainty but also her doubt.

She opens herself up to spiritual concepts of both choosing and surrender. And she allows the reader to walk along-side her on her journey.

Today's meditation by Julian of Norwich is taken from the 21st and 22nd chapters of her ninth revelation.

The Ninth Revelation - The Twenty-First Chapter

And I watched with all my might for the moment when Christ would expire, and I expected to see his body quite dead; but I did not see him so, and just at the moment when by appearances it seemed to me that life could last no longer, and that the revelation of his end must be near, suddenly, as I looked at the same cross... ***he changed to an appearance of joy.***

The change in his blessed appearance changed mine, and I was as glad and joyful as I could possibly be. And then cheerfully our Lord suggested to my mind:

“Where is there now any instant of your pain or of your grief?”

And I was very joyful; I understood that in our Lord's intention we are now on his cross with him in our pains, and in our sufferings we are dying, and with his help and his grace we willingly endure on that same cross until the last moment of life.

Suddenly he will change his appearance for us, and we shall be with him in heaven. Between the one and the other all will be a single era, and then all will be brought into joy. And this was what he meant in this revelation:

“Where is there now any instant of your pain or of your grief?”

And we shall be full of joy. And here I saw truly that if he revealed to us now his countenance of joy, there is no pain on earth or anywhere else which could trouble us, but everything would be joy and bliss for us.

But because he shows us his suffering countenance, and he was in this life as he carried his cross, we are therefore in suffering and labour with him as our nature requires. And the reason why he suffers is because in his goodness he wishes to make us heirs with him of his joy.

And for this little pain which we suffer here we shall have an exalted and eternal knowledge in God which we could never have without it. And the harder our pains have been with him on this cross, the greater will our glory be with him in his kingdom.

The Twenty-Second Chapter

And when he had died or would die so often, he would count it all as nothing for love, for everything seems only little to him in comparison with his love. For although the sweet humanity of Christ could suffer only once, his goodness can never cease offering it.

Every day he is ready to do the same, if that might be. For if he said that he would... for love of me... make new heavens and new earths, that would by comparison be only little, for this he could do if he wished every day without any labour.

But to die for my love so often that the number exceeds human reckoning, that is the greatest offer that our Lord God could make to man's soul, as I see it.

Then his meaning is this: ***"How could it be that I should not do for love of you all that I was able? To do this does not grieve me, since I would for love of you die so often, paying no heed to my cruel pains."***

And this I saw as the second way of contemplating his blessed Passion.

The love which made him suffer... it surpasses all his sufferings, as much as heaven is above earth; performed once in time by the operation of love. And love was without beginning, it was and shall be without end. And for this love he said very sweetly this:

"If I could suffer more, I should suffer more."

He did not say: If it were necessary to suffer more, but: ***If I "could" suffer more;*** for although it might not have been necessary, if he could suffer more he would. This deed and this work for our salvation was as well devised as God could devise it. It was done as honorably as Christ could do it, and here I saw complete joy in Christ, for his joy would not have been complete if the deed could have been done any better than it was.

Amen