

# Listening and Talking . . .

Many of you who listen to my sermons know that I enjoy the practices of contemplative prayer. This prayer is also known as meditation or centering prayer. Besides silent, solitary approach to contemplative prayer there are many other styles of practice.

Another approach to contemplative prayer is writing about your present moment. Contemplation is simply openness to God's loving presence in "what is" right in front of you. Here is an example of writing about an experience.

This story began about six weeks ago when Marian and I received six (6) Hosta plants from Sue Miller. We carefully preserved these plants by giving them sunlight and water every day until we could clean out the existing landscape on the east side of our house.

I dragged out various garden tools and a partial bag of planting soil. Then I dug six shallow holes about fifteen inches away from the house so the rain could water the plants. We have good, dark soil so our local garden nursery suggests we use only a root starter. Marian said, "Now the plants will grow to be even more beautiful in the ground."

As I carefully held the root-ball of each plant, I realized that God is in these plants just as God's Spirit is within me. I imagine God saying, "I'm so touched you want to spend this time with me. Really, I am! It just means the world to me. The thing is, I just can't bear how much I love you. It's too much! And so, at a certain point, I rush into these plants because I want to know what it feels like to be held by you."

Yes, the interruption is the presence of God who comes to us disguised as the presence of our very lives. I begin to recognize the preserving of plants, digging in soil, covering the roots with planting soil, watering the plants ... all of it, as the startling stunning infusion of infinite love colliding into the small shape of my finite and ordinary reality. There, at the intersection of everything, is God with us ... wanting to be touched, noticed, nurtured ... held by us. All we have to do is behold.

How do we serve God? We serve God by loving and serving God's people and all God's creation. The God-Self is the Great Love that we abide in and lives in each one of us. If I am fully known by God, and loved by God, and seen for what I am – warts and all – and accepted and forgiven by God, then all I can do is return the compliment to all God's family. All you can do is love God's people the way you have been fully known by God.

As I conclude this writing, I hear Another say to me, "We will laugh and create. We will always have permission to be ourselves with each other. The greatest gift that I can give to you is to always live and love you with my whole heart."

I cannot love God perfectly or show God anything perfectly. But I will always let God and others see me for who I truly am. Now it's your turn to write your experience.

Blessings on all as we Journey together,

Pastor Tom Cici