

A Thought for Epiphany 2

17th January

Today's question is, "how does God speak with us?" But before we tackle it, I want to ask if you've reached the stage where you don't really feel like listening... A recent survey found that more than two-thirds of adults in the UK report feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 is having on their life. The most common issues affecting wellbeing are worry about the future, and feeling stressed or anxious (*Health Foundation Report, 2020*). It's hard to believe God has a plan anymore, isn't it? Let alone that we're meant to be listening for His voice because we're part of it.

Yet that's exactly what God is expecting us to do. How?

The writer of Psalm 25 gives us 3 things to help us. Firstly, in verse 4, he asks God to reveal his paths and ways. This language is picked up from Moses (Exodus 33:13) and the cry is expanded in Psalm 119. He's talking about being saturated in the word of God – the Bible. Not just spending 5 minutes a day with a little bit of it, or listening to a 10 minute sermon every so often, but being **saturated** in God's word. This is where it starts; with the Bible, God's revealed Word.

Secondly, in verse 14 the writer paints a picture of God sitting with a group of his friends – those who live an awe-inspired life before Him – and sharing what's on his heart and in his mind with them. God's plan is for each of us to be part of this circle of God's friends - the family, church, fellowship you're part of – and in that circle, the Bible says, God will share what's on his heart. Be part of it, however and wherever you can.

Third, and this is a shock for those of us who were brought up to see God as a distant and somewhat stern King issuing decrees from on high, the writer tells us that God speaks with us from alongside. Author Jim Packer illustrates this with a story about getting lost in the car, in the days before SatNav. We're hopelessly lost, driving around, and we see someone just by the roadside. We stop and ask them if they know the way to where we're going. "Yes", they say, and then they give us a lot of complicated directions. We're none the wiser. And then they say, "I'm going that way – I'll get in and direct you". And so step by step – "turn right here", "next left", and so on - we get where we're going. You're not worried any more about not knowing how to get there, because you have the guide with you, and you trust him. That's how God guides us, says Psalm 25. He comes into our lives and, step by step, he'll stay with us throughout life, sharing each moment and guiding our paths, our steps, our choices into the plans God has for us.

There's a lot more in this Psalm, but I want to mention one more thing. Psalm 25 verses 12 and 13 are picked up and explained in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10;

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”(Ephesians 2:10, NIV)

According to the Bible, we are God’s craftsmanship – God’s work of art. The original word (in Greek) translated “handiwork” is intensely creative – it’s the word we get “poem” from. Everything about you is part of God’s craftsmanship. And God has a set of things for you to do. Yes, even now! Who you are, who you have become is unique and there are things only you can do. God has prepared them, and you, and only you can do them.

I don’t know whether you’ve given up on this idea. It’s been a tough year, hasn’t it? We miss our friends and our patterns of life. We are maybe reaching a time in life when we feel like we’ve done everything God has in store for us. But this verse says something different. It says that God still has an incredible plan for your life, and he will guide you along the best pathway for you, walking alongside, one step at a time. That’s God’s promise to you. Saturate yourself in His word – be prepared to listen and do; be part of a Christian – church - family which will pray for you and listen with you; and let God be the one you trust your life and future to, every moment and every day.

“When you align yourself with God’s purpose as described in the Scriptures, something special happens to your life.” (Bono, lead singer in the band U2)

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