

Wonder



I watched him with the ladybird. He let it crawl slowly, inquisitively round the base of his thumb and into the palm of his hand while gently lifting it to let the light accentuate black on red. Does every creature know its creator? Did that ladybird know itself moving across the hand of God? Not held, but safe. Being in that enormous hand, but not grasped by it. Loved, but free to walk around or even fly away. The hand would always be there. It would never be withdrawn. I sensed his joy and I am sure he knew my feeling of wonder. I wondered even more that he must know what we see as the anti-social habits of the ladybird and yet he is still happy for it to be in his hand. To love it and care about it. Maybe even to give it a name. It was not the first, nor the last time I felt that glory-awe in his presence. It is that wonder of a child-like mind which saints like Therese de Lisieux helped me begin to understand. I say begin to understand because it is still Incredible to me that God can think like a child, and therefore, even more incredible that a child can think like God! I have learned a little of the blessings associated with child-like thinking and how, by clinging to an uninhibited wonder we are able to live in a world full of the presence and power of God.

There was another time when we watched the stars through the office window and I remembered African nights. He never mentioned the names of stars or constellations. No doubt to save my embarrassment, for I still become confused about great bears pushing ploughs. But he pointed to them as though he knew each one. I saw him as the Creator sifting the Milky Way through his hand like a rush of diamonds. Each one a satisfying treasure. Each known intimately, like that ladybird finding its way home.

I go to the office at times just to find again that sense of wonder, and adoring him, be led to humbling reverence, and on to swamping compassion. Those visits are so necessary for me when too many daily experiences suggest we limit God to the boundaries of our own minds. If reverence is the child of wonder, then compassion is the grandchild. How we need to wonder. Wonder leads to true worship and worship to love. Child-like wonder makes the everyday an adventure in a world of mystery and beauty where everywhere I see his signature.

I learned that again as he led me to the window of my memories. So many pictures rose up. Some were fleeting scenes - some moments where I wanted to linger. He is never in a hurry. Glory scenes are eternal moments. I stayed a long while with the waterfall memory. I was behind it, looking out through the glassy sheet of water. It was the day before our second daughter was born, and ever since my mind has intertwined those two events. I used to try to figure out the significance of the outpouring of the water from the rocks and the birth of a child, but now I leave that to cleverer minds. Now I let the moments meld and breathe a wonder-prayer. Yet more than that. I leave that moment, as often I have left his office, with a swelling desire to love the whole world because that seems the most appropriate response to the memory and the moment.

So I have come to see the importance of wondering before God. It is all too possible to crawl like a ladybird across the hand of God and not even know it is a loving hand - let alone his hand. The wonder brings the reverence and the reverence the praise, and the praise the love, and the love commitment.

Turning to the cross-window I watched other scenes flash past and paused at one or two, like the awesome, fearful moment when I saw my own impression of Isaiah in the Temple. The cavernous place was in shadows, momentarily dispersed with seraphic beauty as winged creatures flew round crying 'holy'. In the faint glow of reddened embers on the altar I saw the prophet humbled before his mighty God. We paused again when the window filled with light. It was that extraordinary all embracing, possessive light of Patmos. I could see John gazing into the blinding mix of cloud and sun, caught up in the splendour of his Lord and friend. The moving scenes stopped finally to let me see a fishing boat not far from land in Galilee. I watched Peter, kneeling clumsily with his friends between the nets and a great pile of fish. He gazed into the face of Jesus and I could almost hear him whisper, 'My Lord.. my God! In all these instances I saw how closely related is the call to serve God and an experience of true worship. I recalled mother Julian saying that we must equally fear God's greatness and love his goodness.

The glory moment puts life into perspective. It changes relationships. It promotes compassion and forgiveness and peace-making. How can bitterness and unforgiveness remain in the light of experiences like these? A sight of natural beauty; an act of kindness; the birth of child; a reconciliation; a ceasing of conflict; a heartfelt apology..... These are the glory moments which change the world. These are the experiences which inspire 'big' prayers; encourage faith, dispel doubt and despair; cause love to act in compassion for others; and allow this creature to approach his awesome creator judge with hope and love. Glory moments are those times when we walk round his hand like a ladybird, - around the hand which gave us form and being, purpose and destiny; the hand which has the power to effortlessly crush us to dust and yet holds us lovingly. I am grateful he lets me sit down in his office. It would be impossible to stand at times so close to such mind-blowing, heart-aching wonder.