

A Morning Meditation on October 16th, 2017

What does it mean when we wake up in the morning? I don't often ask myself that question because I am usually focused on preparing for whatever is ahead of me that day. I am aware that God is with me but only just a little aware. Does that sound strange coming from a retired pastor?

Despite all of my training in theology, spirituality and pastoral care, I sometimes find it more difficult to think about God when I first awaken. This isn't an everyday experience, but it happens often enough to concern me. I wonder if my Parkinson's disease is slowing down my thinking and my awareness of God. Some days it seems that it is.

After breakfast I feel a little more energized, and I look in the book of daily devotions known as Disciplines 2017 published by The Upper Room. It focuses on the assigned Lectionary readings for the week. I pick up the Bible to begin the search for today's reading: [Exodus 33:12-23](#). In fact, I don't need to search. The Bible opens, without any conscious effort on my part and with no bookmark, to the exact page of the recommended reading for this day.

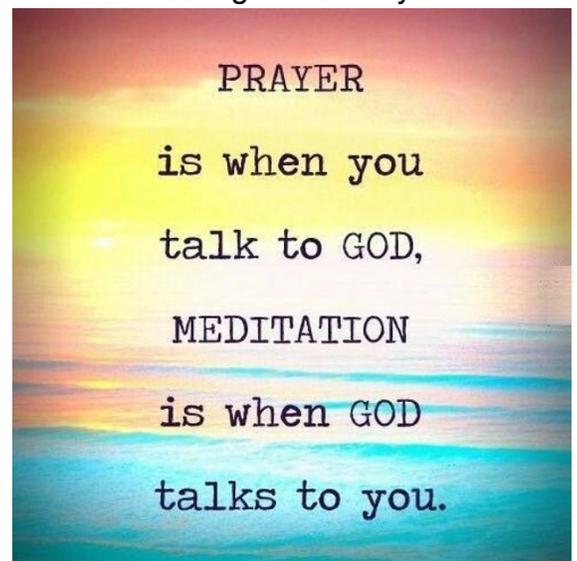
What is the message about or from God this morning? Of course, the Bible always is about God's love for humans like us, but it's also about how we respond to God's love. Today's reading is about how God loves the people of Israel so much that God promises Moses that God will be with God's people when they set out again from Mount Sinai.

I want to remember and to give thanks that God has brought me through each stage of my journey as well--especially the night that is just ending as I awaken. I also want to remember and give thanks that God has brought my wife, Jane, and our children and their families through the night as well.

Why do I focus on getting through the night as if it were more than a time to sleep? In part it is because I know from experiences as a hospital chaplain that people die at night as well as during the day. Yet there is more than simply thinking about night and dying.

I think that the night both symbolizes and is a time of "letting go." We may struggle to control what happens to us while we are awake, but when we fall asleep we do are not in control of whatever our minds need to process. Night is a time to sleep, but it is what happens while we sleep that is important. Our minds work on storing in our memories the events of the day. But there can be much more happening as we rest.

Night, or whatever time of day we sleep, is more than a time for our brain to put the day's events into our memory and to recover enough energy to face the next day. Before we fall asleep we can also invite God to come into us to renew and deepen our love for God. We can, and I do, ask God to enter more deeply into our inner selves--into our unconscious minds and



even into our souls to heal and to redirect our attention to God and to what God wants us to do each day.

My belief is that God is always with me and within me as well as with and within every person whom God created. However, I am also aware that I don't always focus on God's presence during the later parts of the day. It's not just an early morning problem. So, night becomes a time when I can consciously withdraw from the distractions of the day to know that God is with me. Just before going to sleep I ask God to heal whatever parts of me need healing.

That covers a lot of territory because, like everyone else, I carry stories of my past along with the stories of many parishioners and patients I have known. They are not all epic misadventures but some are still quite disturbing to remember. Also, during the day that I just lived I have not always done what God wanted me to do in God's service. I need to remember to confess that to God and to ask for God's grace so that I won't try to control even my tiny portion of the world.

As the hymn says, with a slight alteration, "This is my (God's) World." I need occasional reminders of that because I live in a stream of news some of which is really disturbing and only a little of which makes me feel like something wonderful is happening amidst all of the chaos. I also live amongst a complex set of relationships some of which are not as healthy as I would like them to be.

One of the perhaps not-so-ordinary experiences I have is knowing that I am called by God to allow God to work through me each day. What I do, say and even think today matters somehow in God's plan. Without God's love I can do nothing. With God's love in me, as well as in you, God can do far more than we can imagine. Even when we don't remember that God is at work, God is still with us seeking to work through us.

Finally, if I truly want to serve God, then I can't place obstacles (all the various ways of being self-centered) on the path that God lays out for me each day. If I don't pray during the day and when I go to sleep, I do, however put myself at risk of not dealing with whatever blocks the road that I want to walk each day with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, I offer a prayer something like this as I go to sleep, "God, please forgive my self-centeredness during this day. Come into my unconscious mind and soul to heal whatever in me needs to heal. If I awake tomorrow I pray for the grace to remember that You are with me and that you want me to serve you in specific ways. Help me to grow in faith, hope, love and especially in humility. Thank you for loving me and all of your creation."

As always, I welcome your [responses](#).

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