

Lectio Divina: By the Rivers of Babylon



Lectio Divina – Listening to God’s Word with our hearts

“And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us”

In Imaginative Contemplation we pray with the Scriptures, allowing Christ in the Scriptures to speak to us through our imagination. In Lectio Divina we pray with the Scriptures by dwelling on God’s word by listening with our heart. In Imaginative Contemplation, Jesus’ words, actions, teaching and relationships with people become familiar to us when we enter into the Scripture passage using our imagination. In Lectio Divina, God’s word becomes familiar to us by listening with our hearts and dwelling on His words. Listening with our hearts is something we do automatically in everyday life when we for example dwell on the beauty of nature or listening to someone we love or recall a poignant memory.

Lectio Divina or divine reading has four parts: reading, repeating, responding and resting.

Reading: Begin by reading the Scripture Passage slowly until a word or a phrase resonates with you. Then stop for the moment.

Repeating: Dwell on the words you have chosen. Repeat them again and again as though God is saying them to you. Try not to analyse them, just let them speak to you. Savour the words.

Responding: Allow God's heart to speak to your heart. He wants to be close to you so ask yourself what this invitation could mean. Speak to God with your heart. Be open to what he is trying to reveal to you. Share with God whatever is coming into your heart and mind.

Resting: Rest in the embrace and love of God. It is God's response to us. Your whole being is focussed on God so dwell in the moment. When you feel ready, move on.

As you listen to the following passage, note which parts move you but don't analyse anything. Then when you are ready, **read, repeat, respond and rest** and when you have dwelt on the words that initially resonated with you, continue on reading the passage and repeat the process.

Prayer

We acknowledge we are in the presence of God so let us say:

Direct O Lord and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer: all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings; my hopes and desires; may all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in your Spirit.
Amen

Let the Spirit enter our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we can ask for the grace to trust in the Lord amidst the turmoil of our life.

Introduction to Psalm 136

Psalm 136 is a lament by the people of Israel who are in captivity in Babylon for their disobedience to God and their pursuit of sin. This hymn of lamentation evokes the tragedy lived by the Jewish people during the destruction of Jerusalem in about 586 BC., and their exile in Babylon which is often referred to as a city of sin. This is a hymn of sorrow for what has been lost, a lament for their sin and a plea to God for help. It is a song of sin, repentance, and salvation

Let us now pray with this Psalm with the hope that we too can find a place of solitude to ask for the help of God in the midst of our troubles.

Psalm 136

1. By the rivers of Babylon
where we sat and wept.
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there
we hung up our harps.
2. For it was there that they asked us,
our captors, for songs,
our oppressors, for joy.
“Sing to us,” they said,
“one of Zion’s songs.”
3. O how could we sing,
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you Jerusalem,
let my hand wither!
4. O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem
above all my joys!

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the Psalm saying to you?
2. What word, sentence or phrase most caught your attention?
3. In verse one of the Psalm, the Israelites are reminiscing their homeland; on how life use to be. Do you find yourself reminiscing during this time of pandemic on how things used to be? What do you miss during this time? Like the Israelites, do you feel you are in exile? Speak to God about
4. In the second verse, the Babylonians invite the exiled Israelites to sing and even taunt them to defile the holiness of Zion by exposing its beautiful songs to mockery. Have there been times during this pandemic when you have been mocked by others for your belief and hope in the goodness of God; for your faith that all will be well?

5. In the third verse, the captive Israelites feel they cannot sing as there is nothing to sing about. Do you too feel there is nothing to sing about at this time? Do you feel joy in the little things e.g. the coming of Spring, the longer days, the bird song, the daffodils amidst this pandemic?
6. In the fourth verse, the captive Israelites sing that they deserve to be punished if they place the importance of earthly goods before the goodness of God. When have you put the importance of temporal goods first?
7. What do you think God is saying to you in this Psalm? What do you want to say to God?

Prayer for 3rd Sunday in Lent

<https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Daily-prayers-02.html>

Loving Father of mine,
I feel the pace quicken, the time draw near.
I am filled with joy as I move toward Easter
and the promised reconciliation with you.
Teach me to follow the example of your Son,
to be worthy of being called one his people: a Christ-ian.
Help me to live each day as he did
turning hatred to love and conflict to peace.
I await the new life with eagerness, faith
and a deep gratitude.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd