

COR@9: **Encountering God**

9/9/12 - Introduction

1. About this series

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves -- goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is --
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins

2. Goals & Values

- Participation, timeliness, respect, openness
- Encountering God -- and being changed
- Valuing one another's contributions (and our own)
- Worshipping God
- "All truth is God's truth"
- "Plundering the Egyptians"

"For, as the Egyptians had not only the idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and garments, which the same people when going out of Egypt appropriated to themselves, designing them for a better use, not doing this on their own authority, but by the command of God, the Egyptians themselves, in their ignorance, providing them with things which they themselves, were not making a good use of [Exod. 3:21-22; Exod. 12:35-36]; in the same way all branches of heathen learning have not only false and superstitious fancies and heavy burdens of unnecessary toil, which every one of us, when going out under the leadership of Christ from the fellowship of the heathen, ought to abhor and avoid; but they contain also liberal instruction which is better adapted to the use of the truth, and some most excellent precepts of morality; and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them. Now these are, so to speak, their gold and silver, which they did not create themselves, but dug out of the mines of God's providence which are everywhere scattered abroad, and are perversely and unlawfully prostituting to the worship of devils. These, therefore, the Christian, when he separates himself in spirit from the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away from them, and to devote to their proper use in preaching the gospel. Their garments, also,—that is, human institutions such as are adapted to that intercourse with men which is indispensable in this life,—we must take and turn to a Christian use."

~St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

3. Scripture - a sampling

- Genesis 1-3; 9:8-17; 32:22-30; 41; etc.
- Exodus 3-4 (Burning bush); 9 (Golden Calf)
- Mount Sinai / Tabernacle / Temple
- Nation of Israel
- Role of Angels (Gideon, etc.) -- encountering God through his messengers
- Job 38-40
- Psalm 8, 19, 106, 145-150
- **JESUS****
- Paul: vision of the risen Christ; 1 Cor 13
- James 1: every good and perfect gift comes from above
- Revelation 21

4. Barriers to Encountering God

- Sin (Romans 1, Psalm 32)
- False dichotomy between sacred and secular
- Busyness

“The number one enemy of Christian spiritual formation today is exhaustion. We are living beyond our means, both financially and physically.”

~James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*

“The Desert Fathers (a protest movement in the early church) spoke of busyness as ‘moral laziness.’ Busyness can also be an addictive drug, which is why its victims are increasingly referred to as ‘workaholics.’ Busyness acts to repress our inner fears and perpetual anxieties, as we scramble to achieve an enviable image to display to others. We become ‘outward’ people, obsessed with how we appear, rather than ‘inward’ people, reflecting on the meaning of our lives.

Busyness also seems to be a determination not to ‘miss out on life.’ Behind much of the rat-race of modern life is the unexamined assumption that what I do determines who I am. In this way, we define ourselves by what we do, rather than by any quality of what we are inside. It is typical in a party for one stranger to approach another with the question, ‘What do you do?’ Perhaps we wouldn’t have a clue how to reply to the deeper question, ‘Who are you?’ ”

~ James Houston, *The Transforming Friendship: A Guide to Prayer* (via internetmonk.com)

- Unwillingness to learn and/or obey (like the Israelites)
- Not paying attention
- Trying to be something you are not
- Choosing to go your own way

5. For Next Week

During this week, choose one of the following exercises (or both if you’re feeling ambitious):

a) Look up some of the Scripture passages that relate to “Encountering God” (such as the ones listed in the outline above), and feel free to add others that come to mind. What are some of the ways we see people encountering God in Scripture? What stands out to you? What surprises you? What do these passages show you about God and about yourself?

b) Begin each day by praying that God will make you aware of His presence that day in places you didn't expect. Try to live with an awareness of God's presence, in expectation that He will answer your prayer.

6. Supplementary Reading

- Andre Dubus, *Meditations from a Moveable Chair*
- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*
- Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work"*
- Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (*more academic)
- Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World*
- James Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*
- Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*
- Philip Yancey, *Finding God in Unexpected Places*

Coming up: Dr. Dana Harris teaches on "Encountering God through Scripture"