

## **Meditation 1 (Back Then) Don Stephens**

### **A Meditation on Matthew 5; 1 – 12**

Bishops court – Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 1990

***To bless men and women,  
to make men and women happy  
was the great business  
for which our Lord came into the world***  
*John Wesley*

It is your own ten commandments,  
isn't it, Lord?  
Your way of showing the way to life,  
the way to happiness, to blessedness,  
and you begin them,  
not with lofty words,  
not with the 'Thou shalt not'  
of a previous age.  
No, now you speak  
with love, with gentleness,  
'Happy, blessed are those...'  
A quiet gentle commending  
of the real way to reach your Father.

#### **"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor"**

Those who have no illusions about themselves,  
who know their own brokenness, their sin.  
Who know that without God  
they are nothing.  
And this kingdom that you promise?  
No, not just something to be entered into  
at some future date, but belonging now to them. Entered  
into now as they accept  
your rule of love.

#### **"Happy are those who mourn"**

– mourn for the pain and darkness of this world. Those  
who see beyond sight,  
see what people do to each other  
and to all of your creation.  
Within this dark night of the soul  
they will find you  
and be comforted by your presence.

#### **"Happy are the humble"**

Those who know that they are truly of the earth and one  
day will return to dust.  
Humus – of the earth, humble and human.  
Authentic, real whole people.

Those who know that the spiritual journey,  
life itself, is the quest for wholeness  
and not the mere acquisition of holiness.

So, on and on we can go, speaking of each  
of these ways to happiness, these ways  
of walking with you, being filled by you  
and your love – and in them  
we know that whether we walk, or follow,  
or even stumble, you are there with us,  
our Lord and our God...

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### **Prayer as a gift of God**

Prayer is a gift,  
a gift of God.  
Note the words,  
'of' and not 'from'.  
'From' implies distance  
– God sending me something.  
'Of' shows a nearness  
– God giving himself in my prayer.

Prayer is a gift of God.  
All of God  
– Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
God who is Father, God the Creator  
God who is Son, God the Redeemer  
God who is Spirit, God who embraces.

Prayer is not something that we do.  
It is something we abandon ourselves to.

*Although the above is in my own words, it is almost certainly motivated  
and inspired by Francis – who at the time influenced all of us so  
powerfully.*

*This is another outworking of the previous prayer.*

### **Prayer - A Gift of God**

When we pray we sometimes fail to realise fully  
is that what we enter into is an event,  
an encounter with You.  
An encounter structured and shaped by You.  
A gift given and participated in by You.  
A gift, not from You, for that implies distance,  
but rather the gift of You .  
You giving yourself, giving of yourself  
in my prayer.

Prayer is the gift of You. You in your totality,  
the God who embraces  
and unites with his creation.  
You, who are Father, Creator.  
You, who are Son, Redeemer.  
You, who are Spirit, Helper.

When we pray it is not something that we do, rather something that  
we enter into,  
something that we abandon ourselves to.  
It is not just of the mind  
rather a response to the deepest urgings  
and stirrings within us.  
It is a response of the heart allowing itself  
to be filled by the heart of God.  
And this event, this encounter with You  
can take many forms, can it not, Lord?  
It is a gift and it is given as you will.  
Acts of praise and adoration, in tongues  
or in free flowing words, poetry, art, music, dance. A few lines from a  
favourite hymn,  
a familiar prayer,  
or our own halting words,  
struggling to give form and beauty  
to the prayer that is within us.

Sometimes simply just being silent,  
being still, at peace before you, Lord.  
It can also be a bringing of persons, concerns, longings with tears and  
even anger.  
Or that deep painful gazing  
at the shadow within oneself.

Prayer is an encounter with you.  
You who are our God.  
Prayer is your gift of yourself to us  
– given not just to few righteous few,  
but given to all  
– all who respond,  
all who take the risk,  
all who abandon themselves to you.  
And this gift, this encounter is not reserved only  
to those special holy places  
accessible to a chosen few.  
No, it is given and available  
to all who long to respond,  
whoever they are  
and wherever they may be  
within your creation

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