

Mercy in the Watches of the Night

Why haven't I come across this song before?
It's from 2006.



But what simple, eloquent, words of falling at the feet of the Father.

His characteristics personified. Majesty and grace, holiness and mercy. Tears.

*Am I unfit for You
Remember me, the one who turned from You
I come in rags tattered by the Fall
And all the earth, a witness to my crime*

*Mercy, weep over me
Let Your tears wash me clean
Majesty, be merciful with me
For my eyes have seen Holy*

*Hear my prayer at night
Let the morning find me alive
For I am tired and weakened by the Fall
Let all the earth bear witness to my cry*

*Let the Amen sound from Heaven as You lift my soul
Let the Amen sound from Heaven as You lift my soul
Let the Angels sound from Heaven, Holy is the Lord]*

Side-by-side in the Minefields

In the light of yesterday's post it seemed appropriate to repost this video:

Gill discovered this song on our 15th anniversary. We were 19 and 21 the year we got engaged...

We're hoping to see Andrew performing in the UK later this year.

Deep Joy

I'm currently reflecting on suffering as an essential, unavoidable part of what it means to live and follow Jesus.

This song by Page CXVI renders it one of the most profound ways that I've seen and heard.

Now, how to express it in dry, non-musical, words...

Remembering Jesus: Soul Survivor and Sacramental Singing



We've just been to Soul Survivor. For the uninitiated, it's a Christian youth festival, held as five separate weeks in various places around the UK. We went to the last week in Shepton Mallet, Somerset together

as a family with our church youth group and with 6,500 other people.

It was fantastic. Uplifting, moving, healing, restorative, life-giving, fun, peaceful, worshipful.

But I had an initial concern that it would be all about the hype and the froth. I had had a passing observation of Soul leader, Mike Pilavachi, and he has, shall we say, a *large* personality. Would the big top and the light show make it just another spiritualised buzz for young people, to dry up like the mud in the fields as the tents are pulled down and the cars drive away?

It wasn't like that. While rightly being the centre of attention at times, Mike, when it mattered, constantly put the attention back to Jesus. He was not afraid to turn off the light show and simply ask people to pray in quietness. People weren't asked to come forward to receive ministry from the big holy guru, but to simply to pray for and care for one another.

I saw people moved with contrition, with love, with peace, with joy.

And there *was* music. Lots of it. Some loud, some repetitive, some light, some profound. It carried people away without getting carried away, if you know what I mean. And while the lyrics were not 18th Century theological treatises, they were meaningful and biblical.

It reprised me with an ongoing thought I've had about charismatic worship of this kind, the sort that's done well. What does it *do*?

Firstly, it expresses an obedience to the Scriptural injunction to build one another up with "*songs, hymns, and spiritual songs*" and to "*sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.*"

Secondly, there is a sense of expectation that this form of worship is an *effective* means of encountering the grace of God in particular, life-giving ways. This is the charismatic sense in which the worship incorporates prayer, healing, restoration, and a growing intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

These are two marks that characterise sacraments. The two canonical Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism are done in obedience and are an effective administration of God's grace. We encounter God in the Sacraments, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

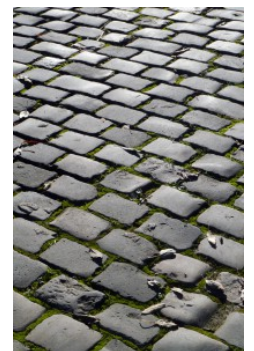
Musical worship is *not* a Sacrament, but in this sense it is *sacramental*. In the midst of musical worship we can encounter the grace of God in a particular way as the Holy Spirit ministers to us.

What struck me at Soul Survivor however, was another aspect of this. The two Sacraments also have the characteristic of being a *memorial*, in the broad sense of the word of "an aid to memory." Jesus commands that the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine and the sharing together should be done "*in remembrance of me.*"

As I watched over six thousand young people singing about Jesus it was clear, by this they were *remembering* him, and they were remembering who they are *in* him. It was truly a memorial. It was kerygmatic. It was a connection with and a proclamation of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

And my prayer is this: that as the young people dispersed into their year, that they would take the remembering of these songs, this worship experience, with them. In whatever stresses and strains they experience, that they would be led to *remember Christ* there, away from the big top, in the midst of reality. That they would do life *in remembrance of him*, and so bear much fruit for his glory. Amen.

Sustenance for the Plodding Pedestrian



*When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!*

*Truth is, You know what tomorrow brings
There's not a day ahead You have not seen
So, in all things be my life and breath*

I want what You want Lord and nothing less

Something anthemic

Rend Collective have released their new album, *As Family We Go*. Here's the introductory video.

It's rare that I come across something that is so anthemic to the way Gill and I seek to lead life.

We as a church were never meant to be a timid club huddled together for safety, but a pilgrim family progress, chasing after the wild lion heart of God...

We weren't created to journey through life alone, but we're called "the family of God" for a reason...

We've got to break out of the cages of safety and fear into the wide open spaces of the unknown trusting that nothing is impossible with God...

We were never intended to go this road alone, we were given to each other as family, and as family we go.

Missional Eschatology Before Breakfast

There are these words:



*Fearless warriors in a picket fence,
reckless abandon wrapped in common sense
Deep water faith in the shallow end
and we are caught in the middle
With eyes wide open to the differences,
the God we want and the God who is
But will we trade our dreams for His
or are we caught in the middle?*

*Somewhere between my heart and my hands,
Somewhere between my faith and my plans,
Somewhere between the safety of the boat and the crashing
waves...*

That things are both “now and not yet” is a fundamental part of Christian spirituality.

It locates us in history: The Kingdom of God is **now**, for Christ is Risen! The Kingdom of God is **not yet**, for we look ahead to when Christ brings renewal and rightness to the groaning of all creation. We are “in the middle” in the opportunity to share in God’s loving purposes, his *mission*. We are not too early nor too late to the dynamic plans of God. This is what *eschatology* and talk about the end of all things means for the Christian.

It locates us in ourselves: “**Now** we are children of God,

but what we will be has **not yet** been made known.” (1 John 3:2). In the middle, we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” (Phil 2:12-13). We know now, whose we are, for certain. But we are incomplete, and we must have growth, refinement, maturation, strengthening.

“Now and not yet” therefore both *grounds us* and *stretches us*.

- We delight in what we have, but holy discontent with ourselves and the world spurs us on.
- We rejoice in where we have come to, but plans and ambitions must be abandoned as shallow and small as God’s perspective invades.
- We have the peace of present rest, but the constant call makes us face our fears and turn away from the control and comfort that would placate them: “Your journey is not yet done, continue, walk this way with me.”

The opposite of “now and not yet” is terrible. It’s “this is all there ever was, and it’s all there ever will be.” In such things we are both rootless and directionless, simply adrift. Rather, lead me through the tensions and pains of the now and not yet, so that, being alive, I may live!

Photo Credit: “Fresh-muesli” by Markus Kuhn at en.wikipedia – Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons.

Immanent Divinity on the

Coffee Corner

Faith is both affective and cognitive.

Which is to say that we not only know about God, but we know him and are known by him. He *moves* us. He is close. He is immanent. Even (and especially) at those times when we are simply drinking coffee in the morning.



I need to remember this. Because often I need to be moved, changed, shifted in perspective and focus – away from my own navel, and the things that would bind, and towards the God of love. And then I can move, and bless, and do those life-giving things. Because of him.

When you move, you move all our fears

When you move, you move us to tears...

Because when you speak, when you move.

When you do what only you can do

It changes us, it changes what we see and what we seek

Wind of Change

For some reason the song by the Scorpions always tears me up.

I think it's something to do with the unrealised dreams and

angst of a browbeaten Generation X.

It takes faith to keep dreaming.

Hope in the Night

I came across Andrew Peterson a little while ago and recently downloaded his album “Counting Stars.” Peterson is a wordsmith and it shows in his songs. Their strength is their lyrics. I have found them to be extremely useful in my ongoing quest to have a more doxological life.

Currently my preference is for more declarative lyrics – worship in the sense of “Holy God, you are like this...” But if you are going to get personal and reflective this is how you do it, connecting to God and the arcs of salvation history:

In the Night ***Andrew Peterson***

I am weary with the pain of Jacob’s wrestling
In the darkness with the Fear, in the darkness with the Fear
But he met the morning wounded with a blessing
So in the night my hope lives on

When Elisha woke surrounded by the forces
Of the enemies of God, the enemies of God
He saw the hills aflame with angels on their horses
So in the night my hope lives on

I see the slave that toils beneath the yoke unyielding
And I can hear the captive groan, hear the captive groan
For some hand to stay the whip his foe is wielding
Still in the night my hope lives on

I see the armies of the enemy approaching
And the people driven, trembling, to the shore
But a doorway through the waters now is opening
So in the night my hope lives on

Like the son who thought he'd gone beyond forgiveness,
Too ashamed to lift his head—but if he could lift his head
He would see his father running from a distance
In the night my hope lives on

I can see the crowd of men retreating
As he stands between the woman and their stones
And if mercy in his holy heart is beating
Then in the night my hope lives on

I remember how they scorned the son of Mary
He was gentle as a lamb, gentle as a lamb
He was beaten, he was crucified, and buried
And in the night, my hope was gone

But the rulers of earth could not control Him
They did not take his life—he laid it down
All the chains of death could never hope to hold Him
So in the night my hope lives on

I can see the Son of Man descending
And the sword He swings is brighter than the dawn
And the gates of Hell will never stand against Him
So in the night my hope lives on