

ON BEING A SON OF GOD

"A little while and you will see me no more. Again a little while and you will see me." Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by this 'a little while and you'll not see me and again a little while and you will see me?' And, what does he mean by this 'because I am going to my Father?'" And, so they spoke right up. "What is this 'a little while? We do not know what it means." Jesus knew all along that they were wanting to ask him about this. "So, you are discussing what I said—a little while and you will not see me and again a little while and you will see me. In very truth I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world will be glad, but though you will be plunged into grief, your grief will become joy. The woman in labor is in pain because her time is come, but if the child is born she forgets the anguish in her joy that a child has been born into the world. So it is with you, you are sad of heart, but you shall see again and then you will be joyful and no one shall ever rob you of that joy. When that day comes you will ask nothing of me. In very truth I tell you that if you ask the Father for anything in my name He will give it to you. Up to now you have not asked a single thing in my name. But now, ask and you shall receive that this joy of yours may be complete. Until now I have been using figures of speech; a time is coming when I shall no longer use figures of speech but tell you the Father in plain words."

(John 16)

I want to do two things. I will try to draw together a clear statement of the four things I have talked about, and then I want to outline what I meant to point to in taking care of yourself.

Taking care of yourself is to discipline yourself constantly to experience your experience by standing at attention in every here and now. For a long time I spoke about the internalization of discipline. I do not believe that a person can discipline himself alone. This group fundamentally is corporate, but you can internalize the corporateness of that discipline, which is really one way of talking about a council.

Secondly, taking care of yourself is to discipline yourself constantly to participate in the double reflection that is meditation. Then third, taking care of yourself is to discipline yourself constantly to appropriate the double paradox that depth consciousness is, or the interior dynamics of faith, hope and love, or the Dark Night and the Long March. You may think it strange, but if you took out of me the poetry we call the Dark Night of the Soul and the Long March, I feel as if I would suddenly disappear. The experience of resentment, suffering, humiliation and depletion is the experience of all these states occurring at the same time. The whole experience of the Dark Night of the Soul and the Long March happens simultaneously and in every second. The impact is similar to the wisdom of those words, "If you see the face of God, you die." I am trying to communicate what I mean by discipline as over against the bootstrap business. Discipline becomes an indicative. Taking care of yourself is to discipline yourself constantly to surrender into Being's care for Being. I like the phrase, "leaning on the everlasting arms." I do not know what language you like. These days it is as though we were children discovering again the awareness of profound consciousness. It is as though we are participants, like Kazantzakis, in the first scream of the ape towards consciousness.

Now, let me speak on meditation. Meditation has to do with the role I consciously play in taking care of myself. I have not stated that clearly. It has to do with the solitary offices that we have worked on for years. Meditation only takes place in a concrete situation. That is to say, only when you get the tragic news that four young people you care about are suffering does meditation take place. Only when you are walking up and down before the assignment board not knowing what to do does meditation take place. A situation that pries loose profundity of consciousness itself occasions meditation. You cannot rule out any intrusion unsynonymous with your own intent as a possible occasion for meditation. Meditation does not have to do with sin; it has to do with redemption. It does not have to do with guilt, it does not have to do with the past, but always the future. A situation is toward the future.

Secondly, meditation has to do with being the guardian of profound living. Whatsoever triggers meditation grinds you right down into the bottom of consciousness. Meditation has to do with the angels and the saints. They only talk ontologically. If some voice says you were a naughty boy, that is fine, but that was not the talk of the saints or angels. Meditation deals with the ontological. Remember those nets for fishing? Meditation, like those nets, keeps you from escaping from that which has opened up for you.

Next, meditation is the endless dialogue of life. Someone said "What is going on in meditation is that God and Satan are

talking and you are caught in the crunch. " It is the dialogue of life where there is mortal combat with Satan. Meditation is never present except in that combat. It sics you on, so to speak, and at the same time it is the sword that you use; meditation is that without which we cannot be conqueror. Meditation automatically operates, but only when it is triggered. In one sense, of course, meditation is always going on; the disciplined man brings selfconsciousness to it. You experience something like this when you pull the trigger, then get out of the way of the consequences. This dialogue of life floods you constantly, but you dam it up. The man of meditation has learned how to get out of the way, or to trigger it, in each situation.

Someone has said the subject of meditation could be most anything. My Sunday School teacher, my father, somebody. A couple of times when I was a kid I had my mouth washed out with soap. You can see it did not entirely cure things. I was pressured into thinking that if you thought good thoughts, noble thoughts, pure thoughts, . . . I don't need to go on, you had parents too. Now I agree that in principle, anything can come into that dialogue. This, of course has to do with the selection of the council, or bringing to selfconsciousness what your council is. If you don't know anything about Luther, then Luther can play only a very small role on your council. Why is it, then, that I should read Shakespeare or poetry, or the Bible? Why is it I should read Amos? It is obvious. Why should I read the lives of the saints? Meditation does not have to do with sitting and reading the Bible. You might say that is an exercise related to something that is different from meditation. I was trained to think that you went to church for the sake of going to church, rather than for the sake of leaving the church and living a life. I was taught to read the Bible because of the exercise of reading the Bible itself. You can see how people did that rather than for the purpose of a meditative life which enables me to constantly be grounded in the profundity of consciousness or in my relationship to the mystery.

I made a talk one time, and my subject was "I Am a God Man." I was trying to say that we have been captured by the mystery, enslaved by the mystery. Two times this morning I almost did something really ridiculous. I was sitting in my cubicle thinking about the weight of the morning when I almost stood up and said "I am too a son of God!" I believe you say this to Satan not the world. I almost said that aloud a second time when we were looking at those names on the board and we were talking about those four kids a bit. I almost said, "I am too the son of God!" You remember Jesus prefaced the 10th chapter of John with the statement that he is the son of God, consecrated and sent into the world. He was consecrated first, then he was sent, then third into the world. That is who I understand myself to be after the reality of my acceptance by God has been drowned by the Dark Night of the Soul and the Long March of Care. Who am I? I am the believing one. I don't believe in this, that or the other thing. I am the believing one. Who am I? That is my consecration. It is like that hymn, "make a captive Lord, and then I shall be free." It is as if sometimes I get all balled up and feel that God requires of me that I be this or that, or I do this or that, or that I come off with this accomplishment. Until the day I die, I am required to be a believing one. Secondly, in that circle, I am the caring one. I don't necessarily want to be a believing one and there are times when I don't want to be a caring one. All morning I just wish I had never heard of caring. I am a believing, caring one. I am the elected one. That is the category of being which has no substance. It is the intensification of knowing that you were sent to be a believer and a carer.

When I stand up and say before Satan or whosoever, "I am the son of God," this is what I mean. I mean I am going to be what I am sent to be-a believer and a carer. That always means until death do us part.

The purpose of meditation is to get you to your teeth in a concrete situation that has opened before you the profundity of consciousness which is the Dark Night of the Soul. It is to say before yourself, the world, God and Satan, "I am God's son." You can turn off the meditative flow just as soon as you get to your feet and talk to whomsoever, and you do not care if they agree with you. In fact there is nothing to agree about or disagree about. "I am God's son." As a matter of fact, I think I will finish the situation today and stand right up tall and say "I am God's son." How about you? How about all of us? "I am God's son."

Joseph W. Mathews