

Where Are You?



‘Where are you?’, is a question with many meanings. It can be asking where we are physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. Such a place, may be stable or constantly changing.

Above is a view at dawn of our front garden. The sun’s rays are not only illuminating the scene as a whole, but enabling shadows and a reddish glow to be seen. I suggest that the sun’s light can symbolize the love of Christ present in and among all the challenges, suffering and wonder we experience in our lives.

When we consider where we are physically, we might first think of the address of the place where we live. Some of us will be ‘at home’ in the house or building where we shelter, eat, perhaps socialise with other humans, and sleep. Such a place and its surroundings can influence how we feel mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Alternatively, we may feel more ‘at home’ where we grew up, or when we are outside in nature, such as at a beach, in a desert or working in the garden. We

may even feel 'at home' everywhere, or not 'at home' anywhere!

If we pause in one of our possible 'at home' places, we may feel it supporting us while we discuss with God our lives and their current challenges and difficulties. These can be demanding spiritual times that draw on our minds and emotions. We see them in the life of Jesus as presented by the Gospel writers. For example, after Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, we are told in Mark 1:12-13 that the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert where he was tempted by Satan for 40 days. This was a time and place where Jesus discovered how he was to conduct his ministry as God's Son. His companions were wild animals, angels and God. We might say that the Father's love, and even the desert, sustained him as he grew in the knowledge of his Father's will for his life.

During Jesus' ministry, after demanding times of preaching, teaching, healing and feeding others, he sometimes went alone up a mountain to pray as in Mark 6:46. These were no doubt times to rest physically and emotionally, but also to give thanks to the Father and reflect on what had happened.

But life is not just working, resting, reflecting and making decisions. Sometimes we, as did Jesus, find ourselves in painful places, seemingly struggling alone in dark shadows such as those depicted in the view of our garden.

In Mark 14:32-36, we are told that the night before Jesus was crucified he went to pray in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. He took with him Peter, James and John, but they fell asleep, leaving him alone apart from God's presence, the garden around him and the ground on which he lay. Jesus prayed to be spared from his coming suffering, but if it was God's will for him he would accept it.

In physical darkness Jesus was betrayed, arrested and deserted by his disciples. Later he died in what was also a dark place when the light of the sun failed (Luke 23:44). But all was not dark. Moments of light and love broke through, such as when Jesus on the cross, directed his mother and John to care for each other (John 19:25-27). Jesus also responded to a cry for help from a man crucified beside him, promising that today the man would be with him in Paradise (Luke 23:42-43). Jesus understands being in the dark, and can be a

comforting light for us, when we feel alone and depressed.

Light, love and Jesus' presence in, and arising out of, suffering can lead us to Mary Magdalene in a garden, grieving over Jesus' death and the disappearance of his body. Suddenly she heard the risen Jesus call her by name (John 20). She was amazed! Emotionally she was immediately in a new place. She wanted to hold him and stay there forever, but was sent to tell the good news to his friends. We also can be encouraged to share our times of wonder and love with others.

Light, wonder and love can be experienced by us, not just when we are in a dark place, but each day. These times may be small as when we complete a task, clean and tidy a room, listen to music, read a book, play sport, or pause to gaze at the beauty of a rose or feel soft wattle blossom. It will also be experienced by us when we exchange a smile with a stranger in the street, meet a friend, enjoy a close relationship with an animal, or look up and see rays of the sun at dawn transforming everything with a reddish glow.

God's very being is love which is the Holy Spirit, and it is poured out continually between the Father and the Son. In this love, which surrounds us and all creation, we are given life. It is the place where we can always be 'at home'.

I believe that for a Christian, the basic answer to, 'Where are you?', is that wherever we are, physically, mentally and emotionally, we are spiritually always in God's loving presence in a world created out of God's love. It is a world in which we can be challenged, suffer, wonder and love. It is where we live, grow and can share God's love in our relationships with God, other human beings and with nature.

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