

Some of you will know from things that I have written or put on YouTube that I am currently binge reading Hilary Mantel's trilogy and tour de force on the life of Thomas Cromwell.

I have completed, *'Wolf Hall'* and *'Bring up the Bodies'* and am currently about a third of the way through the 800 page plus final instalment, *'The mirror and the Light.'*

A bit of historical background for you

William Tyndale, an English scholar living in hiding in continental Europe produced the first English Bible. Although in England at that time it was illegal and punishable by a horrendous death. He used both Hebrew and Greek texts and took advantage of the printing press. It was the first of the English Bibles of the Reformation

In 1536, however, Tyndale was betrayed, convicted of heresy and was hung before being burnt at the stake. His dying prayer was that the King of England's eyes would be opened.

In fact, just one year later with Henry's VIII's blessing, the Matthew Bible, was published by John Rogers, using much of William Tyndale's work,

Back to Mantel's "The Mirror and the light"

There was a passage that leapt out of the page as I was reading the other day, prompting me to take a picture of it on my mobile phone, so as not to forget.

"He", (Thomas Cromwell) "woke, thinking of Tyndale. In Antwerp they slide the printed sheets of the Gospels between the folds of bales of cloth, where they hide, white against white. Warm, nestled, God whispers within each bundle; His word sails the sea, is unloaded in eastern ports, travels to London in cart."

God's word hidden, yet still whispering to those who would listen, to those who would hear it and to those who were searching for it.

Remember Elijah, the prophet, seeking God on the mountain top in 1 Kings chapter 19 - and God was not to be found or encountered in the usual divine show of strength, power and force, God was not to be known in the eternal pyrotechnics of earthquake wind and fire - but rather God was met in the still small voice, in the whisper of God.

I wonder then, where do we hear the whispers of God today?

Where do we encounter that still small voice, that glimpse of the divine, that echo of the eternal.

The Message, is a personal paraphrase of the Bible, in its version of Psalm 81, we find in verse 5, *"I hear this most gentle whisper from One I never guessed would speak to me"*

One commentator I read the other day said *"Just as deep calls to deep, a God-whisper is the echo of the Creator resounding within His children"*.

I Wonder, do we find the idea of a God who whispers more surprising, more unusual and more shocking than a God who shouts?

God not ranting and raging with the bombastic tones of a Brian Blessed for example, but rather the intimate whisper in the ear from a loved one.

The whisper of God is by its very nature quiet.

It is personal and confidential and we find ourselves arrested and calmed by his very whisper and his hushed tones.

It has the power to stop us in our tracks and bring us to our knees and can be deafening in its very essence and smallness.

I wonder who the people are who have whispered God's message to you over the years? Who have been instrumental in teaching you how to listen for God coming close and speaking to you in the stillness and in the quiet?

Where are the places you recall when God whispered to you - perhaps a so called 'thin place', where that which separates the temporal from the eternal has been worn thin over the ages; or maybe in the breathtaking beauty and stillness of creation as dawn bids us wake or the silence of the night sky sends us to our beds?

I wonder what memories come back to you as you reflect on the whisperings of God?

King David, from a humble background, a simple shepherd begins Psalm 55 (again from The Message) by declaring: "*Open your ears, God, to my prayer; don't pretend you don't hear me knocking. Come close and whisper your answer*".

Psalm 23 read to us earlier by Lynda, penned by David, reminds us that even when we are walking through the valley of the shadow, God is with us - The God who is at home in the uncertainty of the silence into which he whispers words of comfort to us.

Jesus as the good shepherd in John 10, is the one whose voice is recognised by the sheep - who respond to his calling, to his whispers.

Life is not like being on 'Zoom', where at a click of a button, all can be muted and the background noise stilled and silenced so that we can hear better

It's hard to catch whispers in noisy environments.

We get distracted by the loud and the blaring. The voice from our endless to-do list reminding us that we don't have time for quiet, or stillness.

The worries of life noisily clamour for our attention and before long we develop a habit of simply not listening.

These past weeks have reminded us all of the need to slow down and to listen. We didn't do it out of conviction, but out of necessity and yet it is teaching us all an important lesson about what really matters.

With less traffic, fewer planes and an enforced new way of being, the bird song sounds clearer and purer and it is almost as if we can hear nature herself take a breath and then slowly exhale.

When all this is over, if we just allow ourselves to simply return to where we were, then we will have missed an opportunity to live better lives and to hear more clearly what is being said to us.

Our God is to be found in the stillness and the silence and is one who comes close to us, even as we seek to draw close to Him, so we must lean in and come closer because He is whispering to me and to you.

*With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of your call,
as noiseless let your blessing fall
as fell thy manna down.*

*Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of your peace.*

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!*

Amen!