

“We are, all of us, never-ceasing spiritual beings with a unique eternal calling to count for good in God’s great universe.

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 21

Christmastide

As you continue to live in the reality of Christ’s Incarnation, consider what kind of life God wants to share with you.

Scripture:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” Genesis 1: 26-28

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6: 9-10

Voice of wisdom:

“To gain understanding of our eternal kind of life in God’s present kingdom, we must be sure to understand what a kingdom is. Every last one of us has a ‘kingdom’ - or a ‘queendom’ or a ‘government’ - a realm that is uniquely our own, where our choice determines what happens. Here is a truth that reaches into the deepest part of what it is to be a person.... (We) are made to ‘have dominion’ within an appropriate domain of reality. This is the core of the likeness or image of God in us and is the basis of the destiny for which we were formed. We are, all of us, never-ceasing spiritual beings with a unique eternal calling to count for good in God’s great universe.

“Our ‘kingdom’ is simply the range of our effective will.... The human job description (the ‘creation covenant,’ we may call it) found in chapter 1 of Genesis indicates that God assigned to us collectively the rule over all living things on earth, animal and plant. We are responsible before God for life on the earth (vv. 28-30).

“However unlikely it may seem from our current viewpoint, God equipped us for this task by framing our nature to function in a conscious, personal relationship of interactive responsibility with him. We are meant to exercise our ‘rule’ only in union with God, as he acts with us. He intended to be our constant companion or co-worker in the creative enterprise of life on earth. That is what his love for us means in practical terms.

“Now God’s own ‘kingdom,’ or ‘rule,’ is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom, but everything that obeys those principles, whether by nature or by choice, is within his kingdom.”

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 21, 22, 25)

Study 5

Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at yourself as an unceasing spiritual being made in the image of God?

Think about the parameters of your “kingdom.” Are you exercising your rule in union with God? How could you increase your intentionality in this?

Dallas Willard seems to be saying that what our life is like now has an effect eternally on God’s kingdom. How does this change your thinking about your daily, ordinary life?

Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Having God as a “constant companion” sounds almost impossible in our noise-filled, busy world. As a first step, try adding one additional pause in your day to refocus on his presence through prayer, a walk outside, reading a psalm, or something similar. Setting a reminder on your phone for the same time each day is a great way to establish this habit.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place (dwellingplaceindy.org), and as a student of The Renovare Institute (renovare.org). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke (recess.racke@gmail.com)