



World Community for Christian Meditation
(Singapore)



Monthly Online Meditation

with Peter Ng

SESSION 4

OCTOBER 5, 2020

Good evening, meditators and friends, and thank you James. We have been meeting now for about five months, so today is our fifth session. Just to give you a quick recap on what we have been sharing in the first four sessions.

The Reality That Is Love

INTRODUCTION – Peter Ng

In the first session I spoke about the purpose of meditation, which is to share in the life of God. That is the whole purpose of our spiritual journey, our meditation. We aspire for no less than to share in the very being of God. Then in the second session we spoke about the way that we come to share in the very being of God, which is to follow Jesus. And the teaching of Jesus is that if we want to follow him we have to leave ourselves behind, which is another way of saying we should stop thinking about ourselves, we should move from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. And that's what we do in meditation when we give all our attention to the faithful recitation of the mantra. Then in the third session, I explained the meaning of Christian meditation. Why do we say that our meditation is 'Christian'? How is our meditation different from meditation in other traditions or from mindfulness, for example? Our meditation is Christian because it is focused on the presence of the Spirit of Jesus within us. We call this the doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In meditation, as we say our mantra, maranatha, we focus our attention on this presence of the Spirit within us. In other words, our meditation is Christocentric. Last month or at our fourth session, I introduced you to the understanding that meditation is our way to experiencing reality. Now this is a very important thing for all human beings, that we want to live our lives grounded in reality.

What is Reality?

So what do we mean by reality? There are two levels of reality one is the visible reality that we all can see around us, the world around us, the material world, the world of our everyday activities. But there is an invisible reality which we do not see but which underpins the visible

reality. And of course that invisible reality is God, the source of all creation. So the visible reality is an expression of the invisible reality, which is God. And meditation takes you into the deeper level where you are able to sense the inner reality the invisible reality. And there's another dimension of reality which is quite important for us, and that is to understand that, the visible reality that we live day to day is temporary, is constantly changing. Our body is constantly changing; our body will die one day. And so, in a sense, this visible reality is transient, it is not permanent. That's why the Buddhists speak about impermanence. But what is important is to go deeper into what does not change, the unchanging reality. The unchanging reality is the reality of God and the reality of our spirit. Our body may die, our body will die. But our spirit is eternal in God. And so a spiritual practice such as meditation helps you to experience the eternity of your spirit.

So tonight, the fifth session, I want to go a little bit deeper into this idea of reality, and that is for us to understand that the reality that we are talking about, God, in our Christian faith we understand that reality of God as Love. God is Love. So this reality is love. And let's listen now to Fr John Main as he explains to us this understanding of God as love and how in our meditation we can enter into this experience of love. So, Fr John Main.

THE REALITY THAT IS GOD -John Main OSB

Transcript of excerpt from *The Heart of Creation, John Main, Collected Talks Vol V, 'The Unreality of Fear'*

The basis of our Christian faith is that God is supreme reality. God is the one who is wholly real, the one who IS. Nothing exists or can exist outside of his reality. If we think that anything can exist outside of God, we are living and dealing with illusion and fantasy.

Meditation is a commitment to reality. If we are committed to meditation, we are more and more profoundly committed to the reality of God, the reality of our own being, the reality of all creation.

The truly religious man or woman is the one who lives their life responding to reality. Not to goals, not to ambitions, not to secondary things, not to material things, not to what is trivial.

Now as Christian thinkers we speak of God as 'supreme reality', but as Christian human beings with hearts of flesh, we say and know that God is Love. This is to say the same thing but from a deeper, more integrated perception.

We experience reality because we are capable of loving and of being loved. To know love and to be known in love is to know reality in the experience of being touched by another, of allowing ourselves to be touched. And then entering into the wonder of the response that love evokes, we are launched into reality.

The great gift we have to share with the world is our experience of reality.

Listen to St John:

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is

love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another. Although God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another. His love is brought to perfection within us. Here is the proof that we dwell in him and he dwells in us: he has imparted his Spirit to us. (1 Jn 4:7-13)

REFLECTION -Peter Ng

God is Love and the longer we meditate, the more we understand that meditation is the way of love. Meditation is our way of loving God, because in meditation we make a commitment; we make a commitment to give our attention to God. So every morning and every evening when we sit down for meditation, we turn aside from everything else so that we devote our time to focus on the presence of God within us. So it's a commitment. I think in any relationship of love, there is commitment, and there's also attention. We give our attention to the person we love. So in meditation, we give our attention to the one we love by leaving aside our own thoughts, our preoccupations, and we simply say the mantra. That is how we give our attention to the Lord who is present within us. And our saying the mantra, our faithful saying of the mantra is a very simple expression of our love.

When we are able to see our meditation in that way, then we enter into a very mysterious experience. And this experience is of us being loved unconditionally by God. This experience of each one of us uniquely loved by God is a very important experience because it gives us the courage, it gives us the confidence to live our lives whatever the difficulty, knowing that we are known by God, that we are accepted by God no matter who we are, whether we are good or bad, that we are unconditionally loved by God. So this is a very powerful experience, to experience ourselves being loved.

Now, when we think about our life, what is a happy life? Is a happy life one where we find satisfaction in money, in wealth, in power? No! I think you can look around you and find that wealth and power is not necessarily happiness. But happiness in everyone's life is this experience of being loved and is about loving. When we can experience being loved and we are capable of loving, that is what gives us the deepest fulfilment in life. And that is the importance of meditation, to experience ourselves as unconditionally loved by God.

I want to offer another very important point about God loving us. Quite often we think of our spiritual journey, we think about our journey of meditation as *our* wanting to love God, as *our* searching for God. But actually it is God who takes the initiative, as the Letter of St John that Fr John Main quoted says. We are able to love because God loves us first. It is because God loves us that we are able to love. So what this means is that our journey of meditation is not just *our* seeking God, searching for God. It is also God searching for us, God loving us, God seeking us. So we mustn't think it is a one-way traffic; it is two-way traffic – God searching for us as much as we searching for God.

Now if you understand that, then you won't be so worked up about the progress you're making

in meditation. Are you doing it right? Do you have any distractions? Are you able to meditate faithfully every morning and every evening? We get so concerned about all these indicators of progress because we forget that it is not just our seeking for God, we making the effort but, without our seeing it, God is reaching out to us. So once we understand it, we can be more relaxed. We can be more relaxed and say, 'I will put in my best effort. I will try to meditate every morning and every evening and even if my meditation is full of distractions, never mind. I offer that, I give as much as I can. Because ultimately, when we get to heaven, it is not so much we climbing up to heaven, it is that we are pulled up by God into heaven. So I think this is a very important insight and understanding for us as we practise our journey of meditation.

So let's now meditate together and understand that when we sit still and we say our mantra, we are opening our hearts to the love of God present within us.

Meditation

HOW TO MEDITATE -John Main

To meditate, each of us must learn to be still, and that's a discipline. When we meditate in a few moments together, all of us should spend a few moments just getting into a comfortable sitting posture. Then all of us at some time probably during our meditation will feel like moving. And not moving, staying still, will perhaps be for us the first lesson in transcending desire, transcending that fixation that we so often have with ourselves. So I want you to understand that meditation does involve this discipline. And the first discipline you have to learn probably is to sit still, to *be* still.

When you sit down and sit still, close your eyes gently, and then begin to repeat your word. The word I suggest you use is 'maranatha'. That's four syllables: ma-ra-na-tha. The purpose of repeating the word is to gently lead you away from your own thoughts, your own ideas, your own desire, and to lead you into the presence of God by turning you away from yourself towards God. Say the word gently, but deliberately. Say the word in a relaxed way, but articulate it silently in your mind: ma-ra-na-tha.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, open my heart to the silent presence of the spirit of your Son. Lead me into that mysterious silence where your love is revealed to all who call. Maranatha, maranatha, come Lord Jesus.



<https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/in-the-beginning>

Let us listen to a reading from the First Letter of John

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3)



PRAYER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

May this community be a true spiritual home for the seeker, a friend for the lonely, a guide for the confused.

May those who pray here be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to serve all who come, and to receive them as Christ himself.

In the silence of this room may all the suffering, violence and confusion of the world encounter the Power that will console, renew and uplift the human spirit.

May this silence be a power to open the hearts of men and women to the vision of God, and so to each other, in love and peace, justice and human dignity.

May the beauty of the Divine life fill this room and the hearts of all who pray here with joyful hope.

May all who come here, weighed down by the problems of humanity, leave giving thanks for the wonder of human life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen
