



Monthly Online Meditation

World Community for Christian Meditation (Singapore) SESSION 22 | 2022 April

The Gift of God to Us in the Person of Jesus

THE GIFT OF GOD IN JESUS – John Main

When we prepare for our meditation, everyone should try to find a sitting posture that is comfortable and yet alert. The only essential rule of posture is to sit as straight as you can on the floor or in your chair. And once you begin that stillness exteriorly, the stillness of your body, begin repeating interiorly, silently, without moving your lips or your tongue, the word 'maranatha'. 'Maranatha' is the oldest Christian prayer there is. It's an Aramaic word, the language spoken by Jesus, and it means: 'Come Lord.' Don't bother about the meaning. Listen to it as four equally stressed syllables: ma-ra-na-tha. And that's all we have to do during our meditation from the beginning to the end. Don't think about anything. Don't think about God, don't think any thoughts pious, holy or otherwise. Try and stay with the word and with the word alone: maranatha.

It is difficult for Christians when they first hear about this to understand how this could be prayer. How could this be significant in the life of a Christian? Is this just a way of relaxing? Has it really any ultimate significance in the Christian vision of life?

The significance is the gift of God in Jesus to each one of us. God has given us himself. Nothing has been kept back. He has given us the fullness of the divinity in Jesus, and our Christian life is our response to that gift. And just as the gift is absolute, total, so must our response be absolute and total. And in responding to the gift of God in Jesus, we place ourselves wholly at his disposition. We don't think any of our own thoughts. We don't even tell God any of our own thoughts. We are simply and totally at his disposition, totally responding to the gift, body and spirit, in absolute silence.

The gift is given. The Spirit is poured into the heart of each one of us in this room. All we have to do is to realise what is given to us by God in Jesus, through the Spirit.

Transcript of extracts from:
The Heart of Creation, John Main, Collected Talks Vol V, 'A Way of Beginning'

REFLECTION -Peter Ng

My brothers and sisters, at these monthly sessions, what we try to share with you is basically two things: how to meditate, and why we meditate. And so tonight, I'd like to share with you before we meditate, why we meditate. And I've chosen as the theme of my talk tonight, The Gift of God to Us in the Person of Jesus. And this is because next week we celebrate the passion, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus during Holy Week. So it's important for us as meditators to understand what is the significance of our meditation when it comes to the person of Jesus.

John Main describes our daily meditation – when we sit down every morning and every evening to meditate, when we do that, he says we are learning to accept the gift of our being. Accept the gift of our being. Now a gift has got two parts: the giver of the gift, and the receiver of the gift. So a gift is complete only when it has been received and appreciated. So when we say we accept the gift of our being, it is to say that we learn to receive the gift and to appreciate it.

As Christians, when we Look at our life as a gift, when we look at our being as a gift, we might think of it as having three parts.

The first part of the gift. Is the creation of our being by God. God has poured his Spirit, his life into us. And that's why we are born, we exist. So first of all, there is the gift of our creation by God.

The second part of the gift is that God has not only created us to live on this earth but he has given us Jesus. Given us Jesus as his incarnation, the Incarnation of God, to show us how to live. And through Jesus, to find our way back to God, to union with God. So, from God we come into this earth, to God we must return. And the way that we return to God, to union with God is through Jesus. So the second part of the gift of our life is the gift of Jesus to each of us personally and to the whole of humanity.

And the third part of the gift of our being is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the gift that Jesus gives to us. You will remember that when Jesus was about to leave this earth in the Ascension, he said 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything (Jn 14:25-26).' So, the gift of the Holy Spirit to us is the third part of this gift.

So every time when we sit down to do our meditation, what we are doing is, we are humbly learning to accept this gift from God, the gift of our life. We are learning to receive the gift of Jesus, present within us in the Holy Spirit. And that is the reason why we sit still and that is the reason why we say our mantra, maranatha. When you are able to understand this teaching of John Main about meditation as the way in which we accept the gift of our being, then you will realise that the fundamental teaching of Christianity is being practised every

time we sit down to meditate. We accept God as our creator, that our being is a gift from God the Father. We accept the gift of his Son, Jesus, sent to redeem us, to show us the way back to God. And finally, you pay attention to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within us. So, Father, Son, and Spirit, the Trinity. So our meditation is putting into practice our faith in the Trinity, in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. So, what happens is that every time when we say the mantra during our meditation, we are saying our mantra in an act of faith in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit. And if we can do that as faithfully as we can day in and day out, that is how our faith gets strengthened by the practice of meditation.

Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION -Peter Ng

Now let us meditate together. And before we do that, allow me to repeat especially for the benefit of newcomers the way to meditate, how to meditate.

Meditation is very simple. But it is not easy and it requires some effort on our part. It involves, above all, a discipline. It involves a discipline of learning to sit still, learning to say the mantra, and learning to meditate every morning and every evening. We have to remember that every time we sit down to meditate, we are honouring, we are worshipping the Trinity present within us. And therefore, as an act of reverence, we learn to sit still – we bring our body to meditation, we bring our body to prayer. That's why it is important for us to learn sit as still as we can. So, we sit with our back straight, with our spine upright so that we can be alert. But we also want to be comfortable in our sitting. We want to sit still, alert, but comfortable – relaxed but comfortable. And the way we do it is to keep our back straight.

The way that we keep our back straight whether you are sitting on a chair or whether you're sitting on a prayer stool or whether you're sitting on the floor in a cross-legged position. You sit in such a way that the frame of your body is resting on your buttock-bone. We have a buttock-bone and you can think of it as having a front and a back. So the way to sit still is to sit on the front edge of the buttock-bone so that that automatically straightens up your spine.

And then, secondly, we put our feet nicely on the floor if you are sitting on a chair, or you fold your feet if you're sitting on the floor in a cross-legged position. We put our hands on our lap or we put one palm on top of the other, or you can rest your hands on the armrests of a chair if you are sitting on a chair. The next step is to close your eyes very lightly so that you are not distracted by what is going on around you.

Next, we relax the muscles of our body, especially our face, because quite often, we carry a lot of tension in our face. So try to relax your facial muscles, and one way of relaxing your facial muscles is to have a slight smile on your face because when we are smiling we are relaxed.

And then lastly, to prepare the body for meditation, we learn to be aware of our breathing. We are constantly breathing, every moment of the day, but quite often we are not aware of our breathing, we do not give attention to our breath. So just before we go into meditation, take a few moments to be aware of your breath. As you breathe in, tell yourself, I'm breathing in, and as you breathe out that a self, I'm breathing out. That is how you become aware of your breathing. You will find that the moment you're able to give some attention to your breath, that slows down the thinking in your brain, helps to quieten your mind. So, those are the preliminary steps that we take in preparing for our meditation, the physical aspects of learning to sit still and to sit comfortably.

Then we move into the meditation itself, which is to bring the mind to stillness. And as you know, the way that we come to this stillness of mind is to take a prayer word, a mantra, the word, 'maranatha'.

The way to say this word is to say it gently, say it continuously. Do not rush to say the word but say it as four equally stressed syllables: ma-ra na-tha. And as you say this word, think of it as a sound. You are generating this sound 'maranatha' interiorly within the body, you might say. And as you generate this sound, as you sound this mantra within you, listen to it, listen to the sound as you sound ma-ra-na-tha, because by listening to the sound you are giving even more attention to the mantra and therefore you are less likely to let go of the mantra.

The sounding of the mantra and listening to it is the best way for us to deal with our distractions, because our distractions are constantly challenging us taking us away from our meditation. So when you find that you stop sounding the mantra and you are thinking of something else, either holy thoughts or unholy thoughts, the way you let go of those thoughts, those distractions, is to humbly return to the mantra no matter how many times you are distracted.

And then one final point, and this has got to do with how we can learn to synchronise the sounding of the mantra with our breathing. For example, some people, like me, when I breathe in I breathe in the first two syllables, ma-ra, and as I breathe out I breathe out na-tha. Or you can breathe in the whole mantra, maranatha, and you breathe out in silence, and then you resume, breathing in the whole word, maranatha, and breathing out in silence.

I think this synchronisation of the mantra with the breathing is very significant. It is related to my teaching just now about receiving the gift, accepting the gift of our being from God. So as we say the mantra breathing in, it is as though we are receiving the gift of life, the gift of our being from God. We are receiving him, we are thanking God for the breath of life. And as we breathe out, in a way, we are returning the gift of our being to God. We accept the gift and we return the gift back to God, and that's how we show our appreciation for the gift of our being that he has given us.

So, let's now put this into practice as we meditate together for the next 20 minutes.

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>

Two Sayings of Jesus

BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN

Two sayings of Jesus are of great importance when we are beginning to meditate. The first is:

Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 18:3)

To learn to meditate you have to learn to be very simple. You have to learn to be childlike. You have to learn, as a child learns, to accept the teaching on faith and to devote yourself to the practice.

LEAVE SELF BEHIND

The second phrase of Jesus is:

No one can be a follower of mine unless he leaves self behind'. (Mt 16:24)

In saying your mantra, you have to let go of your own thoughts, let go of your own ideas, let go of your own imagination, and simply be there listening to the sound of the mantra. Whatever you do, don't think about yourself. If you find, as all of us do, that it is difficult to sustain this, as soon as you discover that you are distracted, as soon as you discover that you are thinking about yourself, return very gently and very humbly to the mantra. The mantra is a great way of teaching us humility. We all discover when we begin to meditate how it is difficult for us to stay for a couple of minutes just silently and faithfully in the presence of the Lord.

Transcript of extracts from:
The Heart of Creation, John Main, Collected Talks Vol V, 'What Jesus Has Done'

REFLECTION –Peter Ng

Thank you very much, Molly, for reading the teaching of John Main on Two Sayings of Jesus, about the simplicity of a child and about leaving ourselves behind.

This morning, I went for a walk with an old friend. A few years ago, my friend found that he had cancer, third stage cancer, very serious, and in his moment of anxiety he came to see me and he asked whether I could teach him to meditate.

So, I spent the evening with him comforting him. And then I introduced him to meditation. I explained why I think meditation will be helpful for him as he goes through his cancer treatment, and then we meditated together for 20 minutes. Then I suggested to him that he should try to meditate on his own. So I gave him the meditation timer that most of you are aware of and which is available on our website, the timer which has some short teachings about meditation to go with the daily meditation, with a timer and a bell. So my friend has been practising meditation for the last four years.

His cancer seems to have been kept at bay. This morning. He told me that he had gone for his yearly check-up involving a lot of scans, blood tests, and he said that as he was being put into the X-ray machine, the MRI machine, the technician said to him 'You are remarkably calm, because a lot of people are rather anxious when they have to go into the machine and lie still for a long time.' So my friend told the technician that he was very calm because he had learned to meditate, that meditation is the secret why he can go for this yearly check-up, which involves a few hours because of various processes and he has to wait, but it is not a traumatic experience for him. He takes it in his stride. He was very happy that he could go for this walk with me and we were chatting about old times.

And he asked me why is it that this meditation that he has been practising has been so helpful to him. So I said to him that sometimes we think about meditation as something arduous to do, something which might be a bit boring. Some people would say it is very difficult, I'm struggling with my distractions, I cannot sit still, 20 minutes is too long so I cut it short to 10 minutes. And I say, yes, it is quite a challenge for people at the very beginning, but after a long period of practice, such as with my friend for the last four years, such as with me after 35 years or so of practising meditation, I say I really find that my meditation period is a time of great joy and of peace.

We quite often think that there's a better place to be, to be thinking of good things, to be doing something, to be running around, to be busy with things. We've never given ourselves the chance to experience that being still in body and in mind and in spirit is a very joyful thing, because we are at peace, we are not troubled, we're not agitated. We are learning to enjoy the gift of life. That's what we are doing when we meditate. That's why I shared with you just now about understanding our meditation practice as the way in which we accept the gift of our being.

My friend is not a baptised Catholic. He goes to church, he has not been baptised yet, but he is very familiar with the teachings of Jesus. So he said, I no longer have the anxiety about death. I'm still a bit concerned about whether the cancer is going to come back, but he said

the one thing which meditation has taught him is that whenever he feels anxious, he can go to meditation and find comfort and peace. And he said it's more than that. He said, 'The longer I meditate the less I fear the prospect of death.' He said he begins to understand why Jesus says repeatedly in the gospel, 'Do not be afraid,' 'fear not'. So I think all of us need to enter into that experience of being at one with Jesus to receive the peace of Christ so therefore, we can live our life fearlessly and joyfully.

USEFUL LINKS

WCCM SINGAPORE	www.wccm.singapore.org
WCCM	www.wccm.org
BONNEVAUX	www.bonnevauxwccm.org
NEWSLETTER	https://tinyurl.com/wccmsubscribe
TIMERS	
- In the Beginning (John Main)	https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/in-the-beginning
- Moment of Christ (John Main)	https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/moment-of-christ
- The Ego (Laurence Freeman)	https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/the-ego
- Fr Gerry Pierse	https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/fr-gerry-pierse
