

Gabriele Hopf, August 10, 2014

“MINDFUL, LOVING ATTENTION”

I thought I'd have us think about loving, or mindful attention, something that can be very rare in our busy lives. Today we are travelling to Corinth and the description of love as being kind, patient, never giving up, in the letters to Corinth seems to suit my topic.

In the first part I will talk about attention to others and in the second about attention to one's self.

Like in Marjorie's reflection some time ago we will be looking to Jesus and the kind of attention he gave to others. Just think of the washing of the feet. Jesus was not afraid to touch people. In Mark 1:13 he went into the sick room of Simon's mother and took her by the hand. To people with virulent skin disease he stretched out his hand (Mark 1:40). When we take somebody by the hand, or look directly at a person who is not well, touching them with our eyes, all our attention is on them. And I think it's that kind of attention that we all need. In our busy lives we sometimes make short cuts. While we seem to be with another person, we really are preoccupied with ourselves; our plans, thoughts and worries.

When Jesus was very worried in the garden of Gethsemane he asked his disciples to be with him; to stay awake with him. They failed.

But there were others in the bible who paid attention to him. Remember Mary and Martha (Luke 11), or the woman with the alabaster jar (Luke 7)? She was attentive with her tears. There is something about honoring the other person if we give her or him our full attention.

Having talked about attention to the other, I would like to do a little experiment that involves your participation. Of course participation is voluntary.

I would like you to think of somebody you don't like, or have problems with.

Maybe it's not possible.

Now I'd like you to imitate me as I make different gestures with my arms.

Still thinking about this person ...? We are ready.

The first gesture.

The second gesture.

The third gesture.

What did you observe?

My second part has to do with attention to ourselves - loving attention.

You are precious and honored in my sight. If we could embody this, and give ourselves this kind of attention regularly, we would have less problems in ourselves and in relationships.

We know that Jesus, often after a long day, went away by himself to be still. Today we would say he meditated and was in communion with his father to be re-energized for his journey to the cross.

Not so long ago I had the opportunity to become attentive to myself and the world around me.

I was sitting on a rock. Slowly I could make out two different songs of songbirds : the cry of an owl in the distance; a bird of prey soaring high in the sky; an airplane; street noises far away; many shades of green; mountains in the distance; the sun on my face; a different warmth in and outside of my arms and hands.

And I was very grateful for this present moment with myself.

Here is another suggestion to capture your attention.

Since it's summer, go and find wild raspberries.

Pick as many as your hand can hold and pop them in your mouth all at once.

Close your eyes.

Thankyou