

Early Christian Letters - James 5

The Invisible Embrace by John O'Donohue

Beauty Cannot Be Forced

Beauty enjoys a profound and ancient autonomy. True beauty is from elsewhere, a pure gift. It cannot be programmed nor its arrival foreseen. It never falls simply into the old patterns of what is already there nor is it frivolous or burdened with leaden solemnity.

Frequently, beauty is playful like dancing sunlight, it cannot be predicted, and in the most unlikely scene or situation can suddenly emerge. This spontaneity and playfulness often subverts our self-importance and throws our plans and intentions into disarray.

Without intending it, we find ourselves coming alive in a sense of celebration and delight.

The pedestrian sequence of a working day breaks, a new door opens and the heart recognizes the silent majesty of the ordinary.

The things we never notice, like health, friends and love, emerge from their subdued presence and stand out in their true radiance as gifts we could never have earned or achieved."



James 5 (NIV) Warning to Rich Oppressors

¹ Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Discuss:

- Justice
- Abuse of Power
- The Arab Spring
- Barclays Libor Scandal



"I categorically deny all the charges," Mubarak said

Patience in Suffering

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹² Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

Discuss:

- Quakers practice
- Do you believe all things work out in favour of those who trust God? (Rom 8:28)
- Anne's sermon about observed suffering



The Prayer of Faith

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

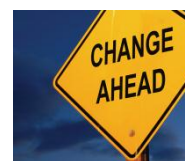
¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Discuss:

- Wandering from the Truth (BBC 1 July)
"Public schools lack moral compass, Wellington College head says"
- The efficacy of prayer
- Bringing people back (next reading)



Call the Midwife Jenifer Worth

Sister Monica responds to Jenny's questions

"Can anyone love filth and squalor? Or lice and rats? Who can love aching weariness, and carry on working, in spite of it? One cannot love these things. One can only love God, and through His grace come to love His people"

I asked her how she had heard her calling, and how she had come to be professed. She quoted from the lines from *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson.

*"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
of my own mind;
and in the midst of tears I hid from Him."*

I asked what was meant by "I fled from Him", and she became cross.

"Questions, questions – you wear me out with your questions, child. Find out for yourself – we all have to in the end. No one can give you faith. It is a gift from God alone. Seek and ye shall find. Read the Gospels. There is no other way. Do not pester me with your everlasting questions. Go with God, child; just go with God."

She was obviously tired. I kissed her and slipped away.

Her constant phrase, "Go with God", had puzzled me a great deal. Suddenly it became clear. It was a revelation – acceptance. It filled me with joy. Accept life, the world, the Spirit, God, call it what you will, and all else will follow. I had been groping for years to understand, or at least to come to terms with the meaning of life. These three small words "Go with God", were for me the beginning of faith.

That evening, I started to read the gospels.



The Grace

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.*

Amen.

