

The Silent Tomb

An Easter Reflection on the Coronavirus

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I had wondered about the significance of the coronavirus peak happening at Easter. What came to mind was Christ's tomb. A tomb is dark and silent and empty, except for the dead. With social distancing measures in place, we've been forced into solitude. We've been stripped of our outer lives and asked to physically detach from the outside world. Life has slowed down for most of us. The boundaries of our personal worlds have been made much smaller.

A spiritual opportunity has been presented to us. We've been invited to go inward, to engage our inner lives. What is the value of going inward? We can know ourselves better, our inner light as well as our shadow selves. We can know God better because God dwells in our inner being. We discover God when we probe our depths because He is found at every level. This probing takes courage because we will be required to face our present fears and unprocessed past pain.

One image of solitude is that of a scuba diver. A scuba suit and gear isolates the diver from his surroundings. His solitude is accompanied by the sound of his breath. I'm not a scuba diver, but the amplified sound of regulated breath is how the movies portray the experience. The diver's breath is all we hear and we focus on it. Focusing on our breath is a great way to turn our attention inward, to ground us in our bodies, and to generate stillness in our minds and souls. Let us remember to breathe with intention and gratitude as those hardest hit by the virus cannot do so unaided.

In this time of forced solitude, I suggest we try to focus on God's breath. God doesn't have lungs, but He has a rhythm, as does everything in the universe. His rhythm is imperceptibly slow, and all other rhythms ride upon it. If a day is like a thousand years to God (Psalm 90:4) then the divine equivalent of a breath is about a month. Don't take this literally. This comparison is intended to remind us that God's rhythm is far removed from ours. God's rhythm is like that of a glacier's movement: slow, massive, unrelenting, and unstoppable. I believe that God's breath operates as the rising and falling of Spirit, as the releasing and gathering of energy, as building up and tearing down. Like a very

low frequency that our ears can't hear, we can feel God's slow vibration in our bones if we stop to feel it. My point here is that we should attempt to engage God in our inward being. If we slow down and listen, we might be able to hear His still, small voice (I Kings 19:12).

In this season of imposed isolation, the silent tomb for us is about death: the death of what is hoped for, the death of our agendas, the death of our current way of life. We are being asked to release all these things, but it is to make way for the new. Colossians 3:3 says, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Our inward lives are to be tucked away and made safe in God, but it requires a death of our outer lives and agendas.

The silent tomb is also about resurrection: a release of new life, a shedding of the grave linens that bound us, a transformation into something new. But resurrection is preceded by a season of stillness. A chrysalis is seemingly dead, but inside, the caterpillar has dissolved into a cellular liquid that is the basis for its new form. A silent transformation occurs inside. This season is meant to be a time of silent transformation for us, where we go inward and listen (to our breath and God's breath), to disengage from our outer lives, to engage our inner lives, to lay down our agendas, and to invite God's agenda for our lives.

No doubt, you're eager for life to return to normal. But it's unlikely that will happen. You need to prepare yourself for the new normal, God's new normal for you. The way to prepare for this new normal is to become grounded in your inner life and to become more grounded in God. Can we learn God's rhythm and learn to live according to that rhythm? The rhythm of the world is rapid and erratic and doesn't bring peace. That rhythm will resume when this is over. Let us not embrace that rhythm again. Rather, we want to recalibrate our souls to the slow, constant rhythm of God so that the world's events won't rattle us.

One's inner life is supposed to be empty, so don't be alarmed to discover poverty there. The inner life is a life of the spirit. It's about spaciousness.

Instead of filling it with stuff, we build an altar of attentiveness to Spirit. We create a dedicated space for the Spirit to make His home, a clear and uncluttered space that we invite the Spirit to inhabit. When the Spirit inhabits this space, the emptiness becomes filled, the spaciousness expands, an inner abundance becomes manifest, and we experience a richness of Spirit that fulfills our souls. We make room for inner change. Remember that “the rhythm of the universe is transformation.” (p. 72, *Four in the Garden: A Spiritual Allegory of Trust and Transformation*)

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Rick Hocker

Author of *Four in the Garden*

An Allegory about One's Relationship with God

Readers' Favorite International Book Award Winner

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