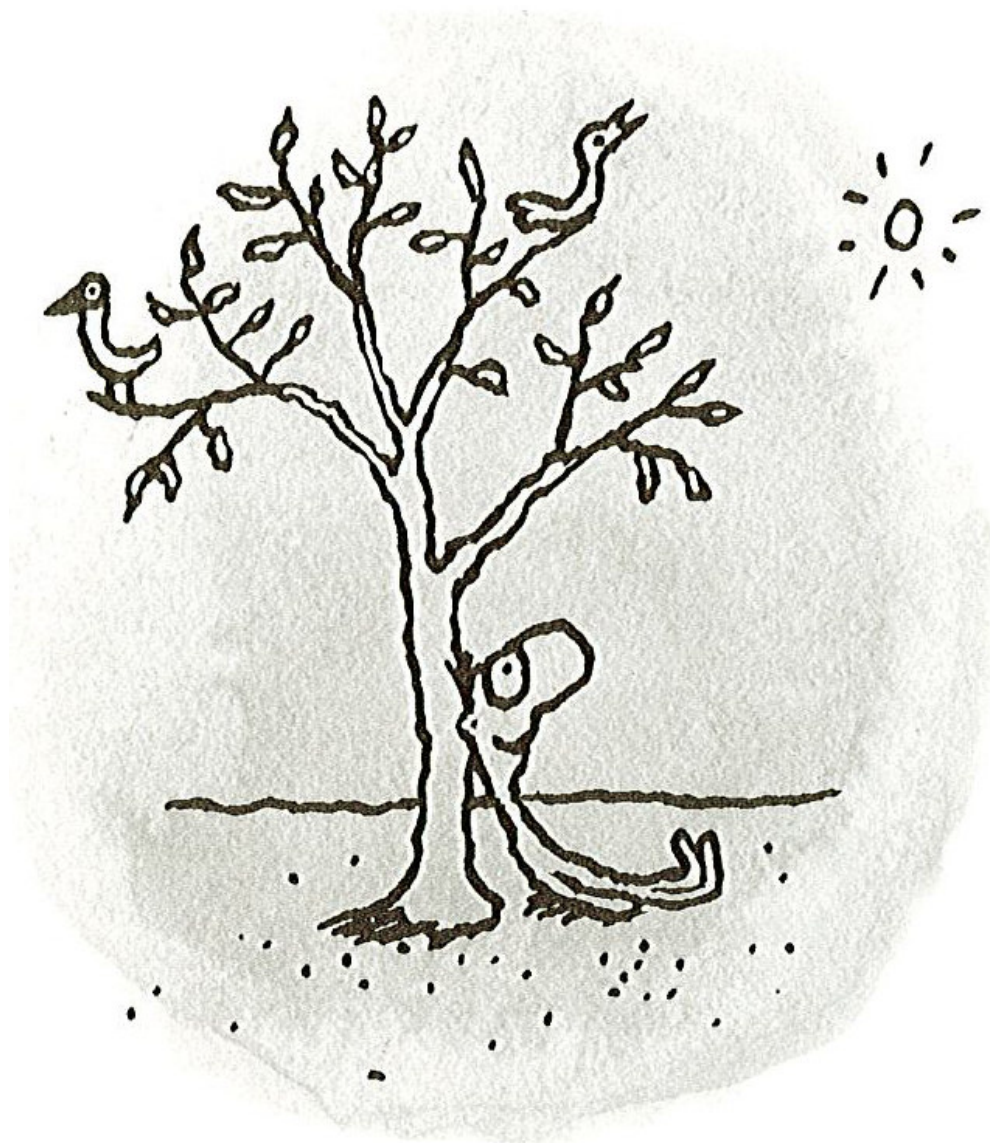


# The Everyday Retreat

*Week 1 – Luther on Prayer and  
Contemplation*



*Leunig*

22<sup>nd</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> June



## Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is not a practice only reserved for pastors, priests, or those in religious life. Rather, it is a God-given invitation to us all, enabling us to rest and to receive from our Creator.

We contemplate every time we see something as it really is, nakedly, face to face. Anyone who has stared in wonder at any part of creation - a new rose bud, a butterfly, ducklings on a pond - knows what it is to contemplate. Often we lose that deep attention and wonder as we go about the business of determining the direction of our own lives and reacting to our driving needs. Our own preoccupations and obsessions manipulate and control our perception, limiting our freedom. Contemplation is a means to liberate ourselves from the programmes which are normally controlling our minds, so that we can enter into a true awareness of God, ourselves and others. It is through contemplation that we can receive from God strength and healing in our “hidden selves” whilst at the same time releasing our need to manipulate and control God, others and our environment.

Martin Luther recognized the value of such attentive listening and holy learning. He teaches; “I want your heart to be stirred and guided.... These thoughts may be expressed, if your heart is rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer, in many different ways and with more words or fewer.... If an abundance of good thoughts comes to us we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is far better than a thousand

of our prayers. Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned from much reading and speculation.” (From Luther’s essay, “A Simple Way to Pray”)

Of course Luther is also assuming a foundation of scriptural understanding and meditation on the Word to exist alongside such attentive prayer. These will be explored further in future weeks of *The Everyday Retreat*. Sometimes, though, we may have been praying before we were even aware we had begun....

## Beginning Prayer

The beginning of prayer  
Is running your hand through water and wondering  
how all the shapes and patterns of this world  
have emerged from shapelessness.

The beginning of prayer  
Is standing on the green and brown earth  
And awakening to the possibility that it is holy  
ground.

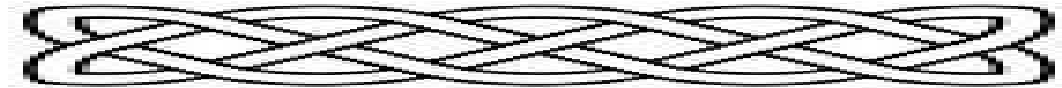
The beginning of prayer  
Is feeling the wind on your face  
And understanding that there is more to the world  
Than what human eyes can see.

The beginning of prayer  
Is gazing up at the vast canopy of the sky  
And longing to understand  
all the mysteries of the universe.

(From The Lion Book of Best Loved Prayer)

## Readings

Each week of *The Everyday Retreat* there will be a set of listed readings. All of the prayer methods being explored throughout the retreat focus on Scripture as the way God speaks to us. You may find that you read all the verses in the week or you may find that the Holy Spirit prompts you to spend the whole week on just one verse. This week, in beginning the retreat, you could focus simply on slowing down and finding the time to read and listen as God speaks to you through the verses below.



Isaiah 43:1-5  
Romans 8:18-30  
Isaiah 49:14-16  
Luke 7:1-10  
Psalm 23

