Prayer and reflection, a joyful conversation with God

Dear all, many of you will know that as well as being called to paint I also believe that I am called to pray. I am a disciple, a learner; 35 years a Christian and still learning more each day than I forget. I will never be anything more than a disciple, a learner, and that is not lack of ambition, that is because there is only one master, only one Lord.

So it is to the life of the master I turn for inspiration. Of course, the Holy Spirit, God within, inspires, and so I find Jesus' need, during his incarnate earthly ministry, to seek Father God in wilderness, water and silence endlessly fascinating. It is one of the most difficult things to find in today's crowded, materialistic, confrontational, high-pressure world. One of the reasons I am called to paint so many of the abstract conceptual paintings such as the peace series, the light paintings, the promises paintings and the ongoing reflections paintings is precisely to open up that avenue into the presence of God. So here are some beautiful reflections paintings of the same lake, Lake Matheson on the South Island of New Zealand, in many different moods. And may the Holy Spirit lead you into the presence of God through spending time in silent contemplation of these paintings, or whatever else comes to hand, scripture, photographs, a parched patch of grass…

In the silence of your own home, or out on a walk, the paintings, or scriptures, or photographs, or meditation, may, if you listen to the Holy Spirit, lead you to a conversation with Jesus, My Lord and My God. It matters not how you find that conversation time, what matters is that you do. Jesus needed to, and He is the master. Us? We are just humble learners, and we need it even more.

Some of my prayer time is consciously intense, emulating, as best I can, the intense prayer of Jesus before all the pivotal points of his earthly ministry (e.g. Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, John 17, and Matthew 26:36-46). Doubtless he was much better at it than me, with my grasshopper mind that can be kept on task for whole seconds at a time! But whether I am any good at it is not the point, the point is that I try.

Some of the time I am busy, washing, dressing, eating, painting and all the time people pop in and out of my thoughts. I regard this as prayer, believing to to be inspired by the Holy Spirit; to be the kind of prayer Paul exhorts us to in letters such as 1 Thessalonians 5, and the joyously prayerful verses 16-18, as well as in my favourite book in the Bible, Ephesians, where Paul again joyfully emphasises continuous prayer in 6:18. When the person who enters my mind has a ministry to bring the Gospel to people, so clergy, lay ministers, and those like so many of my friends, with such a heart for mission, pastoring, evangelism, singer-songwriting, I pray on through the next two verses 19 and 20, for fearless words despite the chains which bind us all; prayer that we will be fearless and effective ambassadors for the Church of Christ.

And, though I don't sleep much, except when it is entirely inappropriate, like halfway through a service, or even before the service has begun, even then I do not despair. For Paul tells us what happens when we can't find the words. And when I'm asleep I definitely can't find the words. To be fair, when I'm awake it is sometimes hard to tell the difference because I still can't find the words. Even then I do not despair, because even then I am still praying! Paul tells us about that in that wonderful Chapter 8 in Romans. What an inspiration the man is, still is, nearly 2000 years later, what an inspiration. Read Romans 8:26 and 27 and rejoice! Love from Rick