

If you look to your right or left you will realise how close the kingdom of God is to you. One might call this ‘microscopic philanthropy’ – we don’t have to look far to find the object of our affection, the one we are to love, the one to whom we have to pay attention if we are to love. This is seeing deeply; giving depth to our existence; seeing things, seeing people in their depth, as also close to God. But before we all start changing seats, it’s not a depth we can conjure for ourselves, for it’s to see one another in the light of God’s love; it’s to step into that love which is a constant, never goes away, only we don’t see it.

The scribe in our gospel passage is close to the kingdom of God because he’s affirmed the central truth of the Jewish faith, the Shema, the command to hear and listen to the belief that the Lord our God is one Lord and agreed that love of my neighbour is central too, indeed, far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice or, as a we might say, any number of Masses or prayers we choose to offer. But whether he’s actually in the kingdom of God will depend now on his reaction, one might say, to his next neighbour; to his interaction with the reality of this world, to the kingdom of God on his doorstep. This is a radically incarnational take on the world – a work in which God joins us as Christ and which we can have a part of, in Christ, also; this creative attention to the detail of life close at hand. The paradox, of course, is that in attending to the detail one becomes, or can become, more aware of the whole: a sort of fractal awareness where the pattern we see in the detail is replicated at higher levels too. There’s a pattern of interconnectedness in all of creation which speaks of its unity, its universal nature – it’s why we prayed for All Souls yesterday and celebrated All Saints the day before. It’s a recognition of the life force that keeps everything in being, alive or dead, animate or inanimate.

I’m now on page 313 of Iain McGilchrist’s *The Master and his Emissary* and its full of such ideas as ‘transparency’ and ‘spontaneity’, the ‘spiritual revelation of nature’ and, I would say, ‘holiness’: the permission we give to the world, including our immediate neighbour, to be a vehicle of God’s loving attention to each and everyone of us; that source of wonder that inspires love.

But these are words only on a page, close to spinning out of control; the inbuilt bias of left- hemisphere thinking, always trying to keep reality at one remove; alive, only in the realm of reason, of concepts and ideas. The lived reality is quite different but the whole point being that Christ has lived this reality for us and *all* we are called to do is follow.

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