

Thy Kingdom Come: Day Seven

Prayer in caring for others (and receiving care)

Tenderness by Elizabeth Jennings

For Alyson

I can't remember any tenderness
Like this before. When I was ill and weak
A gentle nurse would wash me. My distress
She calmed at once. I can remember still
Each quiet move, calm word. I marvel this

Can happen for I am independent and
Think that I am able to take care
Of myself. With her hand on my hand
Washing was a kind of joke to share

Like the thoughts we had about activism and confrontation, today is about praying in action: finding closeness to God in caring for the needs of people or animals. When we talked about this in the Advent group a number of people recalled the intensity of caring for young children, or an older person in their life and recognised in that an unspoken kind of prayer. Care is an honouring of the unique life of those cared for as those loved by God, it is a deep expression of the love God calls us to show, it is being the hands of Christ now. How could that not be prayer?

Today, if you have any caring activity to undertake can you recognise how you are an instrument of God's love?

Could you phone someone or write a letter offering someone caring thoughts?

If you are not able to show physical care for another being can you hold in your prayers those who you care about?

I chose to send this as the Thursday suggestion because it is also a way of honouring all the sacrificial care of those who work in our care and health services. Let's give thanks for their compassion.

And, as the poem highlights, receiving care ourselves, especially if we are natural caregivers, is not always easy, but is a grace in itself.

If you are relying on any care from someone else, can you find a prayer being the receiver, can you recognise God's care for you in what someone else is helping you with?