

The Paradox of Silence

Tony McClelland

Let the words fall
as seeds from the sower's open hand,
into the soil of silence.

There let them,
hidden from sight,
and in their own good time,
bear fruit.

Let silence hold the words,
and in some unexpected morning,
they will greet the sky.

Thus the paradox of silence:
without this soil words find no root,
but to be fruitful,
it must, from time to time,
make way for words.

Tony McClelland is a minister in the Birmingham Circuit of the Methodist Church. A few years ago he had to retire from active work because his health is often poor. That enforced stillness has opened up a space in which words sometimes emerge. Amazingly he has found that sometimes these words express what others too are experiencing.

Discoveries

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In the night:

a word of comfort
and a way through fear.

In the morning:

day that comes as gift,
a world opening into possibility.

In frailty:

the slow wisdom of the body,
the unexpected strength
to stay with this, to wait.

In loneliness:

a surprising solidarity,
a community of separatedness.

In the tears:

a freedom of honesty,
a path to compassion.

In the silence:

a space where love grows,
unhurried awareness of depths.

In another's words:

something we have known together,
but could not name alone.

Climate Change

Tony McClelland

It was our words —
the very things that first
brought us together,
gave us light, kept us warm.
But with every spoken word
a breath, a little thing,
rose into the air,
became the atmosphere,
trapped the truth
and turned it back on ourselves,
slowly driving climate change.

It seemed benign at first —
a thaw in ancient ice,
the calving of new floes,
fresh currents, unfamiliar winds.
But the melting ice uncovered
forgotten fissures,
and the seas began to
shift, rise,
alter the outlines of our maps.
Then we began to name the whirlwind,
personify its power,
imagine it as rage
directed at our shores.

This is our world, now —
a place of deepening storms,
where some are deluged
With meanings dropped like bombs,
while others thirst for truth
in a terrible drought.

If it was words,
whether wise or wild,
that brought the world to this,
then words cannot heal here.
What hope there is
must be found in silence.