

Connecting faith and daily life

The power of imagination

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Isaiah 55:10-13

Sometimes reason will not do. Sometimes logic fails us. Sometimes we look around us and hope and faith desert us. Sometimes only imagination can help us. Then what we need is Isaiah.

The poet responsible for the central section of the book of Isaiah was addressing a defeated people. They had lost their land, their king, and their faith in their God. They lived in exile in a foreign land. Many of them could not even remember Jerusalem. Hope for a return had long gone, and they were making the best of life in Babylon, as reason and logic told them to do.

But along comes the poet. "My word", says the Lord, "... shall not return to me empty... you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace". The mountains will sing, the trees will applaud. The whole world will rejoice as God's people go home.

There is no logic in the words of the prophet. Trees do not clap their hands. Jerusalem is in ruins. Return will be hard and painful. But still the poet sings of salvation, because only imagination will give the people back their faith and hope. The poetry is designed to bypass their brains and get into their hearts – and into ours too, when we need it. 😊



Christian writers and thinkers

part I – Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

by Caroline Hodgson

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a French Jesuit priest, theologian, philosopher and scientist.

During years spent teaching, studying and researching he combined his knowledge and developed a strong interest in the evolution of humankind. Following the publication of *The Phenomenon of the Spirit* in 1937, and an article in the *New York Times* which characterised him as

believing that humans descended from monkeys, his work became increasingly controversial. From the 1930s until many years after his death his work was banned by the Catholic Church.

In his holistic view of humankind and the universe he had, and continues to exert, a considerable influence on New Age thinking. He wrote: "science, philosophy and religion are bound to converge as they draw nearer to the whole". He envisaged the universe as an evolutionary process in which the movement is always towards systems of greater complexity and higher levels of consciousness. Everything, he believed, moves towards a fulfilment in which all things will be gathered up in God. 😊

“ Faith, as Paul saw it, was a living, flaming thing leading to surrender and obedience to the commandments of Christ.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), pastor, author, magazine editor and spiritual mentor

God of hope and love, speak to our hearts and fire our imaginations, that we may hear the singing of the mountains and the applause of the trees, and ever trust in your power to save. Amen.

Malala Day and World Youth Skills Day

by Lisa Tulfer

This week are two occasions to reflect on education and vocation for young people – celebrating advances that have been made in recent years, and committing to do more in the future.

Today is Malala Day, honouring Malala Yousafzai who, as you may remember, was shot in 2012 as part of the Taliban opposition to girls' education. She survived and went on to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of seventeen, and to speak at the United Nations.

Malala's campaign to promote schooling for girls links to World Youth Skills Day on Wednesday, which promotes technical and vocational education and training for the world's 1.2 billion people aged between fifteen and twenty-four. Young people are over three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, and giving them opportunities to learn is one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Like his father, Jesus was a carpenter; Paul was a tent maker; Simon Peter and Andrew were fishermen – all skilled in their particular trades. Is there anything we can do to help someone fulfil their God-given potential? 😊