

Heaven in Ordinary

This month's focus for our time of silence has been inspired by two sonnets. The first, by George Herbert, is called "Prayer". The fourteen lines are full of wonderful images and metaphors of what prayer means to him – or anyone. One of them is the phrase "Heaven in Ordinary". A few years ago the poet, Malcolm Guite, wrote a series of sonnets based on this single sonnet – one for each image. This sonnet and the phrase it explores, are the focus for tonight's reflections.

At this time of year I find myself looking at the world as spring brings visible life and colour back to the ordinary paths I walk along, and the wonder of our created world is shown once again in so many ways.

Heaven is not somewhere far away: heaven is where God is, and each time we notice these glimpses that make us look more carefully and with delight, we have come close to God, and let God, through the created world, through other people, through our senses, come close to us.



Prayer (I) By George Herbert

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's
blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

Heaven in Ordinary – Malcolm Guite (from "After Prayer")

Because high heaven made itself so low
That I might glimpse it through a stable door
Or hear it bless me through a hammer blow,
And call me through the voices of the poor,
Unbidden now, its hidden light breaks through
Amidst the clutter of the every day,
Illuminating things I thought I knew,
Whose dark glass brightens, even as I pray.
Then this world's walls no longer stay my eyes,
A veil is lifted likewise from my heart,
The moment holds me in its strange surprise,
The gates of paradise are drawn apart,
I see his tree, with blossom on its bough,
And nothing can be ordinary now.



You may want to take some time looking at the photos; at what you can see and hear around you; or remembering a glimpse of beauty and heaven you have seen, and giving thanks for this.

The created world is wonderful, and often inspires wonder, awe and a sense of God's hand being very close. But "ordinary" is also the parts of our lives that can seem mundane – but still can be moments and places where we recognise heaven; God's life and presence. This poem, also by George Herbert and well known hymn, sums this up

The Elixir By George Herbert

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heav'n espy.



All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture—"for Thy sake"—
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.



He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

Matthew 13. 31 -33

Think back over the last day, or the last week.

Where have you found beauty or joy or hope or grace in the ordinariness of your living?

These are the blessings of life – give yourself time to appreciate all the blessings you have been given.

Reflecting on an exceptionally average Sunday:

The service was fine. The sermon was fine
Attendance was average (literally exactly average.
114 the current average Sunday attendance for
2026) It was fine. And that's great.
Normal everyday life. The thing is 90% of life is
mundane. So it makes sense that God would
mostly meet us in the mundane.

Normal is okay. Normal can be profound. Not
everything can be amazing. If you spend your
whole life waiting for those mountain top
experiences you'll spend most of it miserable.

You need to learn to see the profound in the every
day. The beauty, the joy, the hope, the grace.

It's all around you waiting to be found.

“Ordinary” for us may be the beauty of a walk, noticing flowers or trees or bird song.

It might be enjoying a rest and a cup of tea or coffee.

It might be planting seeds or baking a cake or reading a book.

But at the moment, there are thousands of people for whom “ordinary” is fear and destruction and injury and death. Can we find “heaven” in that “ordinary”?



From the Very Rev Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem

Renewal in Gaza! As we stop quietly in the moment of waiting, between crucifixion and resurrection, some good news has emanated from Gaza. St Philip's Church in Al Ahli Hospital was used for much of the time during the destruction of Gaza as a hospital ward. The pews became beds for patients needing life-saving treatment from the incredible Al Ahli doctors and nurses.

When the chapel was no longer needed because the casualties were fewer, the chapel was left abandoned and rather worse for wear. So, some of the Christian staff set about cleaning up and restoring it to its original purpose as a place of prayer and worship. This is a small sign in the wider scheme of things but small signs also convey great hope. Please don't forget to pray for the people of Gaza

Christ is risen indeed! But the planes of war rumbled over our heads on Easter morning as deadly destruction continues hour by hour. We can identify with the Marys and Peter going to Christ's tomb more out of fear and sadness.

But Christ was resurrected into a world also not resolved and not basking in tranquility. The disciples heard Jesus's comforting acclamation, 'Do not be afraid' when they still had every reason to shudder with trepidation. The reassurance to them and to us is not that nothing awful or painful will happen to us on the road ahead, but we know the risen Christ goes ahead of us and also walks beside us.

Christ is risen indeed, hallelujah!

At the heart of how we, as Christians, believe God can be with us – or we can catch glimpses of heaven or be included in heaven, are ordinary things and ordinary actions.

We give thanks for bread and share it.

We give thanks for water and use it to mark who we are

You may wish to think of other simple, ordinary things and ordinary actions that become a means of grace and a sign of God's presence.

Be gentle when you touch bread.
Let it not lie, uncared for,
Unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted.
There is such beauty in bread –
Beauty of sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil
Wind and rain have caressed it,
Christ often blessed it.
Be gentle when you touch bread.



In the incarnation, we see God becoming one of us.

In the ordinary and extraordinary life of the church, we see God's hand at work - the Church rolling up its sleeves and getting stuck in, where God is already at work: in the local and the global.

The Church, through the ordinary lives of its people, contains so many extraordinary acts of love: being a simple, loving presence, like the salt of the earth, a light on a hill, the treasure of the kingdom.

Sarah Mullally 25 March 2026

The Bright Field *RS Thomas*

**I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.**

