

Questions for Further Reflection

Isaiah 65: 17-25

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Read the instructions below before beginning the exercise.

Take a moment to close your eyes and center yourself. Breathe slowly, breathing in and holding for ten counts, and exhaling for ten counts, or until you feel yourself grow quiet within.

Read the passage slowly. What parts of the reading capture you? Which verses sing to you? Underline them.

Now read the passage again. Pause at the underlined verses. Sit with the words to which you are drawn. Read them to yourself, slowly, out loud if your circumstances permit.

What is God saying to you today?

In the space below write or draw the thoughts or musings that come to you.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

This passage likely refers to disputes in the community at Thessalonica, about the distribution of alms, or the sharing of communion. It seems that some members were unwilling to support themselves, and rather relied on the contributions of others, or at least, that was the perception.

But our work is not just our labor in the "outside world". It is also our life together. Am I doing what is necessary to support my community? Have I contributed to the common good of our church, our part of the body of Christ?

It is interesting to realize that one can be idle and quite busy. While the primary meaning of the word is inactive, the secondary meaning of the word idle is "without purpose or effect; pointless" (Oxford Online Dictionaries). Witness the proliferation of distractions that fill our lives. We are engaged, and yet we are not "on mission". Perhaps modern day idleness looks like busy-ness, hyperconnectivity, and over-commitment.

Reread the passage, substituting busy for idle. If you are like me, perhaps you feel uncomfortable; there is a conviction in your heart that this applies to you.

Our idleness- whether busyness or indolence- takes us away from the important work of God. Finding the proper balance of prayer, work, rest, and play is difficult.

How are you doing with that balance?

What one change could you make to your life to improve your balance? Who can help you with that? Tell someone who will support you and hold you accountable as you make this change.