

REFLECTION

If I Were God For a Day, What Would I Do?

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ONE REACTION might be to say that it is an impertinent question. Who do I think I am?

Yet, would that be God's reaction? Let's think about it.

He has created us in the divine image. There is something of God in us. He loves us and invites us to love in return. He wants to be part of our lives and to share everything with us. God takes us seriously and trusts us. He calls us to cooperate in enabling his Reign and his world to gradually emerge. We are co-creators with God, stewards of creation.

If I were God for a day, what would I do? Perhaps it may be that each of us is pulled in two directions.

One is to bring God's love to the world. But true love is very difficult. As parents know with their growing children, loving means letting go, allowing the person to find their way, respecting their freedom. To watch, wait, be there, and allow them to make their own mistakes, painful though it can be. But always to keep on loving, forgiving.

The other pull is towards the God-given task of bringing order and harmony into the world. That too can be hard. Taken to extreme it can become a compulsion to create a perfect world at any cost. When that is combined with interfering in the name of 'love' it can be a sort of dictatorship, a totalitarian state. It's an instinct to give the world a spring clean, with no nasties, no problems. Everything [and everyone] is in its place, a world where wheelie bins stand at attention on nature strips trimmed with short back and sides. But is it God's world, God's Reign?

So we are still left with 'if I were God for a day, what would I do?' Is it a question that we actually can answer? Or is it that, at best,

we can only get a glimpse of a reply, a hint of an explanation? How? 'By putting on the mind of Christ', as Paul says, but also by telling stories. Here are four that blend both of these.

1. We can start by reading the parable of the darnel [the wheat and the weeds] in the Gospel of Matthew 13: 24-30.

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, 'Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?' 'Some enemy has done this' he answered. And the servants said 'Do you want us to go and weed it out?' But he said, 'No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.

2. The second is from Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog* Vol. 1.

A woman dreamt she walked into a brand new shop in the marketplace and, to her surprise, found God behind the counter. 'What do you sell here?' she asked. 'Everything your heart desires,' said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for. 'I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom for fear', she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, 'Not just for me. For everyone on earth.'

God smiled, 'I think you've got me wrong, my dear.' He said. 'We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds.'

3. Then there is another parable from Anthony de Mello.

A sheep found a hole in the fence and crept through it.

He wandered far and could not find his way back.

And then he realized that he was being followed by a wolf.

He ran and ran, but the wolf kept chasing him, until the shepherd rescued and carried him lovingly back to the fold.

And in spite of everyone's advice the shepherd refused to nail up the hole in the fence.

4. The final story comes from George F. Will, a syndicated columnist and commentator in the United States. In a column written in the 1980s entitled 'Light at the End of the Day' he starts by saying that Americans consume daily 20 tonnes of aspirin. So they need some form of enjoyment after a stressful day. Many get it from reading to their children, especially poems written for children by an author named Shel Silverstein.

Will goes on to say that 'all children have a sweet tooth for praise, and there is no praise as sweet as being taken seriously, for exam-

ple, by a parent who reads to you. Most of all, children like the sense that their parents are realists and truth-tellers. How else can children value their parents' praise? So it is good for their souls to hear a parent read some of Silverstein's poems.' One is called 'God's Wheel' in which a child is speaking. Here is the poem.

God's Wheel

*God says to me with kind of a smile
'Hey, how would you like to be God awhile
and steer the world?'*

'Okay,' says I, 'I'll give it a try.

Where do I set?

How much do I get?

What time is lunch?

When can I quit?'

*'Gimme back that wheel,' says God,
'I don't think you're quite ready yet.'*

Will concludes with this comment:

The smile, part shy and part sly, that flickers across the face of the listening child—a smile of rueful recognition—is, for an adult, more therapeutic than aspirin can ever be.

This reflection is an adapted version of a topic in a series *Christian Living* published in the *NZ Marist Messenger* in 2005.

A one-sided emphasis on the 'not yet' may lead to defeatism and despair in this life and a neglect of the joy and victory over sin and death in the Spirit's having already come. The 'gates of Hades' (Matt 16:18) shall not overcome the church! [...] The now and the not yet must be held in tension. Believers can rejoice in having passed from death into life and in the abiding presence of the Spirit of God. But the victories in the present life, are also accompanied with all too many defeats. [...]

Christians continue to look longingly toward the blessed hope (Titus 2:13), when the Son of Man will return and bring the kingdom to its consummation. Having tasted of the first fruits that are already realized, the believer prays all the more earnestly 'your kingdom come' (Matt 6:10) and Maranatha (1Cor 16:22; cf. Rev 22:20).

—Bakers Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology