

Hand Made: Going Deeper on your Journey with God

Week 2: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Psalm 139: 13-18 (NIV)

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
you eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

"Prayer means entering into communion with the One who loved us before we could love... In prayer, again and again we discover that the love we are looking for has already been given to us and that we can come to the experience of that love. Prayer is entering into communion with the One who molded our being in our mother's womb with love and only love. There, in the first love, lies our true self, a self not made up of the rejections and acceptances of those with whom we live, but solidly rooted in the One who called us into existence. In the house of God we were created. To that house we are called to return. Prayer is the act of returning."

from Henri Nouwen, *The Road to Peace*, Orbis Books, 1998.

Lectio Divina is an ancient traditional way of praying with Scripture. There are four stages.

Read the passage slowly. Try to read with the eyes of the heart, rather than the head. Notice anything that's standing out to you, perhaps just a word or a phrase. If several things are standing out, step back, see if one comes to the surface more than the others.

Meditate If something is standing out for you, stay with that, repeat it inwardly. Ask questions of it. Don't analyse it with your head, let it speak to you, let it tell you what it is about, why it might be standing out for you today.

Pray Is there a response welling up in you? Is there something you would like to say to God, a question you would like to ask? Let that response come to the surface. Make that part of your prayer.

Contemplate You might find you reach a point where words are not necessary, where you want to sit with that image or idea, and let it sink in. Resting with it in God's presence, perhaps even the words melt away. This is the essence of contemplation, a quiet being with God, without imposing anything.

The Warp and Weft of Life

"In the centre of the room was the Hattersley loom with its multiple shafts and treadle pedals. Its heavy iron frame gave the room the feeling of a Victorian workhouse. Although there was talk of introducing the double-width Rapier loom, the weaving technology had not changed much since the industrial revolution. The loom had to be man-powered. That was the accredited stipulation, it could not be driven by electricity or gas, it could not be steered by computer.

The rest of the world were making lengths on screaming, ceaseless power looms, but not here. Here on the islands the cloth had to be woven by hand and powered by foot, it had to be made at home in exactly the same manner as it had been centuries before. The one innovation, the single concession to the weaver's comfort, was that the looms could now be attached to a single pedal and shaft. In front of the loom was his father's seat and the loom pedals, which, ironically enough, made the whole thing resemble a church organ.

'Do you never get lonely?' Cal asked, 'Working here by yourself'

'Sometimes,' says John, 'but I'm never alone.'

Cal was expecting some trite line about the omnipresence of the Lord but John surprised him when he said 'I think about you, and I talk to you'.

Cal crossed to the yarn shelves. It was his favourite place in the whole world. The shelves were full of hundreds of yarns, all the romantic colours of Scotland, bracken and grouse, gorse and heather, rain and moss, and the chaffed red of a drunkard's face. Amongst these were some punkish hot pinks and acid yellows, violent tones that made people recoil until they saw the finished cloth and saw how skilfully John could mix sour greens with wheats and nightshades until it was a field of spring bluebells.

It was a treasure box. Cal had loved playing with these cones when he was younger. He would take a cone and wrap it around his finger until each finger was a multi-coloured worm of mad stripes. John had taken time with him then, unwrapping the hues, rewrapping them to show harmony or contrast, or how a Macdonald Funeral tartan should look, opposed to a Macleod Hunting. If it's right, John had said, you should be able to feel something. His father had wrapped Cal's little fingers in lapis, violets and cornflowers. He added a light, overripe peach tone and then to ground it all a mossy brown with flecks of coppery sienna.

"That was the day we took your mother to Callanish, do you remember? That was what the stones and the sky and her good coat had looked like." John unspooled a single strand of vermillion and wrapped it amongst the others. "You took a nosebleed. You could never stop picking at yourself."

from *John of John* by Douglas Stuart, Picador, 2026

You might like to spend some time thinking about the colours and textures which tell your story, or make up who you are. You might like to write them down, or draw them, or use coloured threads or wool if you have them.

You might think about your day (like the family day at Callanish) or your year so far, or your story to date. Do this prayerfully, asking what God might want to show you as you choose colours or make marks. Then spend some time reflecting on what you've made.



The Bayeux Tapestry

"The presence of the embroiderers is palpable, held fast in their stitches..." It's there in the choices they make, in the different skills she can see at work, and in their creativity, imagination, empathy, which still stand out after 900 years.

"I spend nearly three hours with these needlewomen, trying to enter their world through how they sewed, noting their attention to weight, movement, texture, expression, character, emotion, place; trying to understand the choices they made — this pattern, that colour, this stitch — how they made their story tangible, truthful and intimate."

Clare Hunter, *Threads of Life: A History of the World through the Eye of a Needle*, Sceptre, 2019

"Each [detail of the work] implies, by what it is and what it is not, the orientation of the craftsman toward work, as well as toward workmanship, nature, beauty, tradition, and human character. Together, the details reveal an extraordinary investment of time, care, and skill..."

Peter Korn, *Why We Make Things & Why It Matters*, Vintage, 2013

"The human body is the most complex system ever created. The more we learn about it, the more appreciation we have about what a rich system it is."

Bill Gates

Weaving Our Lives, by Alexa Sunshine Rose (lyrics)

We weaving our lives
We are weaving our hearts and our minds
We are weaving the bright and dark threads of our journeys through

We weaving our lives
We are weaving a blanket of light
We are weaving a basket to hold all that's true

