

Be Still and Know . . .

By Jane Bailey

Be still and know that I am God.
— Psalm 46:10

Be still and know . . . know what? One thing I do know is that it's very, very hard to be still. "Can't you just sit still?" I exhort my children . . . and my husband. If I face the truth, I'm talking to myself, desperately trying to still myself.

Maybe if I can be quiet, I'll know something. I'd like to simply be still and get to know myself . . . be still and know Jane. Instead my e-mail pings, pop-ups propagate, real and fake news reports vie for airtime, and pictures are photo-shopped so that truth is camouflaged. If knowledge is truth, then even if I can be still, I'll have a tough time finding what I'm supposed to know.

As the pings come faster, the video games get louder, Alexa dictates my music, Siri orders me around, and Roomba gets caught in a corner, I feel like I'm on a merry-go-round with Jacques Brel singing "Marathon, marathon, marathon" at a dizzying pace. I want to scream, "Stop the world—I want to get off!"

What about that "be" word? Be still. Is it like Hamlet pondering "To be or not to be," or perhaps more like the Beatles' song "Let It Be"? Should we let things be as they are? I want to shape a future with stillness so I can know what I'm supposed to know: truth. That's it: I want a future where there is room for God. This is a task way beyond my capability; this is one for the collective "we." I have, however, made a small start. I have . . .

- located where the pings were hiding in my computer and phone settings so that I no longer hear them whenever I get a message;
- made a trip to the Microsoft and Apple stores to get help filtering my pop-ups;

- unsubscribed to many listserves, blogs, and marketers that I don't read or use;
- deleted Twitter and Pinterest (I never did start Instagram);
- given up my LinkedIn account;
- restricted my time on Facebook;
- turned off television (okay, maybe with some exceptions for HGTV and reruns of *The Office*);
- devoted more time to reading and writing;
- spent more time exploring nature; and
- been more present with family, friends, and strangers.

In sum, I'm working hard to be mindful.

"So big deal, what does that have to do with a future with God?" I hear you asking. "Where's the spiritual side of what you're doing?"

We work not just for God, but with God to create a future for peace that passes all understanding.

My humble reply? "This is only my start at getting still, so I can know."

It's the stillness that enables me to remember when Mary and Martha hosted Jesus. There was Martha bustling around and perhaps playing a bit of the martyr for doing the cooking, setting the table, getting the meal together—like an overworked mom on Super Bowl Sunday while the rest of the family is together enjoying the game. There was Mary sitting with Jesus, listening—really listening—to him. And what does Jesus say? "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part" (Luke 10:41-42).

An article in the *St. Anthony*

Messenger calls us to be "A little more Mary, a little less Martha." How hard it is to listen to Jesus in the cacophony of our lives, our busyness, our technology. The rewards are in the doing, not the "being." Perhaps we can start with balancing our presence with our busyness—being calm during the storm of life.

Though Jesus orders calm, he is found in the tumult. There he is in the middle of turmoil making order of chaos. "He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Quiet! Be still!' The wind ceased and there was great calm" (Mark 4:39).

Repeatedly throughout the Bible, God makes order out of chaos. He doesn't only command order, he does the ordering—the cleaning up, if you will.

We learn in Isaiah 41:10: "Do not fear, I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God." And in John 16:33: "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

We've put down our Martha dishes and gotten still enough to sit with Jesus and listen. Can we hear the answer to *Be still and know . . .*? Have we really let ourselves gather that the answer is not in ourselves, but with God?

March seems to be the perfect month for a Lenten walk—a walk of quiet discovery to listen to the psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:11). We hear the words of the Catholic hymn:

*Be still and know that I am God.
I am the Lord that healeth thee.
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.*

The Lenten walk leads us into the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, Peter, James, and John. Will we stay awake with Jesus to really

know that he is God-with-us—the redemptive Christ? This is exactly the invitation that Pope Francis extended to the general audience in Saint Peter's Square on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2014: "To have a greater awareness of the redemptive work of Christ."

In my flailing-about technology impinging on my ability to be still, I forget that God reigns in the chaos. The commentary on Psalm 46 on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says that it is "a song of confidence in God's protection." The repeated refrain emphasizes "The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob" (Psalm 46:8, 12).

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be—past, present, and future. World without end. Amen. In other words, our future is insured. We work not just for God, but with God to create a future for peace that passes all understanding.

I have a friend who tells me that Psalm 46:11 is her life-verse. As I walk the Lenten road this year, I find the verse is now mine too: Be still and know that I am God.

Jane Bailey is a freelance writer who lives in Litchfield. She is a retired educator who enjoys writing creative nonfiction that explores matters of the heart. Find more at <http://www.janembaily.com>. Scriptural passages are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (<http://www.usccb.org/bible>).

