

# **Gateways into Prayer**

**A Route Through the Walls on the Way**

Alasdair W MacKay

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## **Preface**

On any journey along any path at any time, we meet barriers and walls along the way – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This collection of meditations and reflections will, I hope, serve a dual purpose: to remind me of my experiences on this section of my journey, and to encourage anyone who travels along this way in future.

Any journey is made all the more enjoyable when it is shared with others. This compilation is dedicated to all those who have walked with me on my journey: to those who have been the voice of God to me, guiding me in the wilderness; to those who held up their torch to light my path in the dark; to those who led me to the gates whenever I met a wall; to those who showed me the quiet corners when I was lost in the crowd; and to those who gave of their time and themselves that I might be able to undertake this journey.

But special thanks are due to Jane who has walked with me over the peaks and through the valleys, in the darkness and in the light, and time after time has helped me to find the gate. Without her calming presence I might still be banging my head against one of the walls.

With every blessing for the onward journey,

*Alasdair W MacKay*

## After the Wall Came Down

A few years ago, I spent a few days in Berlin; it was an experience I will long remember. The city is enshrined in history. The buildings bear testimony to the different stages in the lifetime of the city, from its earliest days in the Prussian Empire and then the Napoleonic era, through the Cold War, and right up to the modern day.

But the building that struck me most was a little hut in the middle of a fairly minor side street. Why? Because that hut was the guards' hut at Checkpoint Charlie. Unused since 1989 (when the Wall came down), this was one of the few authorised crossing points where people with the appropriate papers were permitted to cross between East and West Berlin. Being able to walk past this hut without any official documents and without anyone demanding to see them brought home to me what a privilege it is to be free.

Walking along streets that for decades formed part of the Wall, where the buildings on either side were in different territories, was very moving. Even the view from Pariser Platz, through the Brandenburg Gate and along the avenue to the Siegessäule (the Victory Column) was once completely obscured by the Wall.

I remember watching the news broadcast in 1989 when the Wall was breached. The shouts of joy as the wall came down, the looks on the faces, the hope in the eyes of the people, a vision of a future full of hope. Today, Berliners are free to move around the city as they wish. And although this had been the case for over a decade when I visited, there was still a hint of that "release" in the air. The sense of freedom in that now united city is a million miles from the divided Berlin that the people still remember.

We have that same hope, that same sense of freedom. Once we were separated from God, but now we are reunited in Christ. Where once access to God was restricted to the few, now the way is open to all - the Temple curtain, our Berlin Wall.

Reflecting on the recent history of oppression in Berlin made me appreciate my freedom. But what stirred those who first sought to breach the wall was surely a sense that this freedom was a thing worth pursuing. Let's ensure we portray the same free spirit that will drive others to breach their walls in pursuit of Christ. And as they seek to do so, let us be there to help them.

## Breaking Through the Wall

Walls to protect us, walls to defend,  
Walls that segregate families and friends;  
Walls marking boundaries, saying "Stranger, keep out",  
Walls where graffiti is the voice that dares shout.

Walls in communities, walls between streets,  
Walls between me and the people I meet;  
Giving assurance to those on one side,  
Denying the same to those from whom we hide.

Protection from bullets, shelter from blast,  
Blockade to the helper who cannot get past.  
One side is a place for the hungry to feed,  
But how will they know that we've got what they need?

Walls for security, walls for defence,  
Walls for protection, walls for pretence?  
There will always be reasons for building a wall,  
But does that really help solve the problems at all?

Walls made of iron, walls made of stone;  
Walls built by others and walls of my own.  
Walls to be broken, but where do I start?  
Walls in my mind and walls in my heart.

Walls built of prejudice, walls built of fears,  
Founded in history, strengthened by years.  
Safe on the inside, but protected from what?  
How do I know what is real and what's not?

Walls made of brickwork can be blown in a tick,  
And a bridge can be built from the very same bricks.  
Uniting communities across the divide,  
All friends together, all on one side.

Walls that we hide behind, walls that we use  
As justification – any excuse;  
Those are the walls with which we must start,  
The walls in our minds and the walls in our hearts.

## **The Dark Valley**

The valley is deep; the mountains on either side are tall, and the shadows they cast are long and dark. The sun has long-since disappeared, as the day turns to evening and the evening to night. And all at once it is dark.

And in the darkness, the hoot of an owl startles me and the whistling wind has an eerie chill. Rustling leaves, is there someone there? Friend or foe; man or mouse? Or is it the wind, just the wind? A twig snaps underfoot and I leap – I would run, but where to? I can't see a thing!

From the hilltop by day the scene was awash with colour, a picture of creation with the soundtrack of nature. By night the only colour is black and the music of silence is chilling.

The ground beneath my feet slopes gently down, taking me lower still. And as I drop deeper, deeper, deeper into the valley, so the darkness intensifies and my fear grows. But as the darkness becomes more intense and my sight becomes like blindness, then my hearing sharpens. Every sound is amplified, reverberating of the hillside to confuse my bearings even more.

But then through this medley of sounds, I hear a noise which I recognise – the gentle trickle of a stream. Water – fresh running water, beckoning me to follow. And gradually the image comes back, the view from the hillside of life and creation abundant with colour. So I follow.

The stream becomes a brook, and the brook feeds into the river – the long straight river through the valley, guiding me in my state of blindness.

And as the sound of the trickle becomes louder, so the way ahead becomes clearer. Are my eyes adjusting to the dark, or is the light returning? Perhaps both, but the real security is that I have found the river, the same water that was running alongside me on the hillside before; the water that nurtures the life around, in the plants and the animals, in the birds and the trees. The same water which quenched my thirst in the heat of the day now leads me safely through the dark chill of night. The river of Life.

Lord,

Why must I plummet to the depths of the darkest valley in order to hear your voice?

Quench my thirst and calm my soul. Lead me through the dark valleys, just as you do on the bright hillside of life.

Refresh me, renew me, replenish and revive me. Amen.

## **Out of the Darkness**

I stumbled round in darkness 'til the words of one so wise  
Asked why my candle burnt so bright while yet I closed my eyes.  
So I looked and saw my candle burn, and walking by my side  
Just as He had always been, my Father and my guide.

He asked "Why were you worried so? Do you not know I care?"  
But my eyes were shut, I could not see, and I didn't know him there.  
He said "I'll always be here, in light and dark the same.  
So if you cannot see me here then just call out my name."

Today I know he's with me and my path he lights for me,  
And he'll help me over obstacles or through adversity.  
And when my legs grow heavy or my eyes get tired and dim,  
I do not need to struggle on, for I can rest in him.

When the river sweeps the bridge away o'er the waters deep and wide,  
He lifts me on his back and takes me to the other side.  
And when the route gets slippery or leads onto shaky ground,  
I can follow in his footsteps - there safe passage can be found.

Sometimes it all goes dark again and I think my light's gone out.  
Not so, my torch still shines ahead, it's just my eyes are shut.  
But when I open up my eyes then I will surely see  
That my worries are unfounded for my Father's here with me.

## Cucumber Slices are Good for the Eyes

As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it, we all need to be "spurred on" and "encouraged" on our spiritual journey, sometimes more so than others. It never ceases to amaze me just how God uses conversations with friends to do just that for me.

The words of a friend stirred me up one evening, in a conversation that ranged from the bible to the use of cucumber slices on the eyes. In doing so, she brought me closer to "a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" that Paul speaks of in his letter to Philemon. The following poem was distilled from the thoughts that were evoked.

"Cucumber slices are good for the eyes"  
I was told, so I tried it one day,  
But a colleague who clocked it decided to mock it,  
So it swiftly got hidden away.

Sometimes I used it when I thought it was safe,  
When no-one could see me to jest,  
But it rarely came out when there were others about,  
Never mentioned in front of the rest.

Well you know how it is, when you're busy-biz-biz,  
Good practice slips off the routine,  
And so it came to pass, my eyes suffered alas  
Because I'd been afraid I'd be seen.

But one day I saw it - another who wore it,  
And wore it in public with pride!  
And this positive stand made me understand  
That my fears had been unjustified.

So back to cucumber to awake from my slumber  
And refreshing my eyes through the day,  
Then someone passed comment about the benefit from it  
And it started to spread straight away.

The markets sold out as the word got about  
The cucumber shelves were left bare.  
Now in each nook and cranny, from infants to granny,  
It's cucumber slices they wear.

No this isn't an ad, or the launch of some fad,  
By the Cucumber Marketing Board!  
But herein lies a word that demands to be heard  
By each one of us, truth be told...

When the secret was shown and the truth became known,  
Then the growth was surprisingly fast.  
And as truth was passed down generations have found  
That it works today as in the past.

But were it not for the few whose conviction shown through  
In their boldness in wearing a slice,  
Then cucumber instead would be eaten with bread  
And not refreshing and opening eyes!

## Always There

For seven years now I've been making the daily journey to London; almost 3000 times my train must have taken me past that spot. And yet this week I spotted it for the very first time - right there beside the line, just a few yards from the track-side - a little church. How could I have missed it before?

It's in a beautiful, though isolated spot between Benfleet and Pitsea. There's not another building in sight, just a minor track and a footpath past the graveyard. A good distance from the A13, and only the occasional train and a stretch of marsh between it and the Thames. It must be the most beautiful place for quiet contemplation.

But how could I have missed it before now? So perplexed was I that I looked for it on my map when I got home at night, and yes it was marked - it hadn't been built overnight.

So why is it there? There is no sign of any community around. Is this the first seed of a new community? Just as God was there in the very beginning, preparing the way and meeting the needs of the people before the people existed. Or is this the last trace of a community now gone? A reminder that God will be there still at the end, when all else has passed away.

Either way, the fact is that it is there now and has been there all the time - and yet I did not see it. And then it struck me, as I drew the parallel that God is here today and has been at work all around me every day - what else have I missed?

How could I fail to see it for seven years? My nose in a book, stuck on the crossword, resting my eyes... not paying attention. There are about 40 miles of track on that route; what other nuggets have I been missing?

Lord, forgive my failure to see You there in my midst every day. Open my eyes, my heart, and my mind to see You more clearly today.

## **Easter Beach**

All was still dark as we gathered,  
Awaiting the sun to arise,  
But that Easter morning the mist on the shore  
Withheld the view from our eyes.

As we listened once more to the Gospel  
And sang the familiar songs,  
The night melted into the morning  
And the dark, all a sudden, was gone.

No-one could tell you the moment,  
Though the time was foretold way ahead,  
For the few of us there were shrouded in mist  
Whilst others were lost in their beds.

But last nightfall the promise was given,  
That next morning the sun would arise,  
And the promise was true for 'though hidden from view  
The sun had brought light to the skies.

A promise made, an answer given;  
Alleluia, the sun has risen!

Is that how it was on that first Easter? Friends gathered awaiting the promised rising of the Son, only to miss the great event when it happened; whilst others slept on in what they thought was still the darkness of night, unaware that the Light of the World had risen. Lord, help us to trust in the wonder of the Resurrection.

A promise made, an answer given;  
Alleluia, the Son is risen!

## **A Different View**

In the course of a few weeks I have moved desks three times at work, each giving me a different view of London. The view of the Thames estuary to the east became a view of Greenwich to the south, then a northwards view of Stratford, and finally overlooking the City of London. And during this time I have changed my role within the company: where once I was the provider, now I am the customer - a different perspective on the same big picture.

Sometimes it is good to seek out that different view and to see things through someone else's eyes. It is when we step into someone's shoes and look at things from their angle that we discover the value of things - things that matter. And the same is true of what we read in the bible.

When I read a well-known passage of scripture, it is easy to allow my mind to wander because of the familiarity of the text. But when I place myself in the story and look through the eyes of one of the characters then the text can speak to me in a completely different way, as if I had never heard that story before. Imagine the grief of Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus died, and now from that start point, imagine the contrasting joy when Jesus raised him from the tomb.

Reflecting on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross of Calvary can be moving. But much more powerful is the lesson when I really imagine myself in Jesus' shoes: as He faced the difficulty of telling those closest to Him that He was about to leave them, as He prayed alone in the garden, and as He faced up to the task which lay ahead of Him. The King come to serve His people, the Creator God who held the World in His hands delivering Himself into the hands of the World.

A different view from a different window creates a very different picture of the city. Fresh eyes on a familiar story can paint a different image, and highlight new facets previously unseen.

Lord, help me today to see and hear those old familiar stories through Your eyes and ears, to appreciate more completely the sacrifice You paid for us, and to grasp more fully the immensity of Your saving actions. Kindle in me something of that love that knows no bounds, that love that seeks to serve rather than be served, that love which prays for others before self. Show me a glimpse of the view from Your window, that I might appreciate the art through the artist's eyes, that I might read the text through the eyes of the author, and find the hidden depths in the imagery therein. Amen

## **Humanity - A Bird's-Eye View (Meditations of a George Square Pigeon)**

Tourists admiring the statues,  
Walter Scott standing proud in the Square,  
I perch myself up here on his head  
So if you're passing below me beware.

Shoppers weigh-laden, the addict's dream fading,  
Police dragging beggars away,  
Cameras snapping and businessmen flapping,  
I see it all in the course of a day.

The endless rotation of traffic,  
Then at five o'clock everything halts  
For something they all call the rush-hour!  
One of mankind's most curious faults.

The great City Chambers where the councillors sit  
To discuss the affairs of the day,  
But the impact that all of their efforts has had  
Can be seen just a stone's throw away.

The councillor's dining on salmon and steak,  
It's just one of the perks of the job,  
While out in the Square a tramp scours the bins  
For anything worth a few bob.

Me, I just swoop down on morsels of food,  
But you've got to be fast here to eat,  
For it's not just us pigeons who fight for the bread  
Now there are people who live on the streets.

We've got a fair bit in common  
Us pigeons and mankind you know,  
The higher we soar the less we all care  
What we drop on the people below.

Oh the Square at the heart of the city,  
One of Glasgow's most beautiful sights.  
Such a tragedy that it's also the scene  
Of humanity's desperate plight.

## A Fruitful Future

*Note: When this was written, four constituent congregations were on the point of leaving behind years of history and heritage, in order to join together as one new congregation in Eastern Southend, now The Cornerstone URC, Southend-on-Sea.*

At this juncture, we are looking forward together to what is a clearly a time of mixed emotions for many of us. But that first Easter was not the end for the early Christian Church; rather it was the start. What happened in the days and weeks to follow would surely have blown the minds of those first Christians, even the disciples.

In recent bible studies, I have been reflecting on aspects of the Holy Spirit, and considering the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) As I considered how this fruit grows, I was reminded of the apple tree in the wilderness otherwise known as my back garden.

Two years ago the tree was hidden from the light by the mass of brambles which had taken over the garden after years of neglect. If the tree did bear fruit then it was never picked as nobody could get near it. Last year, after a major overhaul in the garden, the tree blossomed and produced apples, so many in fact that I could not keep up with it and many more were appreciated by the birds than by me.

So how does one grow such a bumper crop? If only I knew! The truth is I have no green fingers. The only things I can grow are weeds. And yet, in spite of my efforts, the tree bore fruit. It was God who sent the sun and the rain in the right measure to sustain the tree and grow the fruit. All I had to do was to keep the weeds down.

And so it seems to be with people. When we start out on our Christian journey, we need to be nurtured and fed as we grow in the light and absorb the living water. As we journey along and meet others, we help them to see the light and encourage them as they grow. And all this we do in spite of who we once were.

In the same way, our relationships develop and blossom and will go on to bear fruit. If we drink of the water and look to the light then we can become a strong fruit-bearing tree. Soon we will be worshipping together on one site, and those relationships will have a greater opportunity to develop if we let them.

So what should be our priorities as Christians as we come together to nurture this new growth? Just like a marriage, it will still need work beyond the day when we move in together, so where do we start? Pastoral care, worship, mission, the building? Yes, it is all these things and more besides.

But think again of the apple tree. It might be so much easier to get the perfect prize-winning apple if we could grow them individually. If we could just train the sunlight on the right side of the tree and direct the rainwater and nutrients along the right branch then we would surely have the most succulent apple ever tasted. But what about the rest of the fruit? Of course, we will turn to the next branch to nurture that apple once the first is ready, but will it be too late? Will the neglect not have hampered its growth or even caused it to wither? I fear so.

So as we take this next step forward and continue the work that has started, let's not forget any apples along the way. And if we ensure that everyone continues to get light and water in the right measure then we will bear much fruit together.

Unlike the British summer, there is no lack of light from the Son and no shortage of water, so there's plenty go around. All we need are plenty of willing hands in the garden. (Matthew 9:35-39) Green-fingers are not required; the Lord can work through any one of us. Remember what He did at Pentecost (Acts 2).

## A Triumphant Homecoming

*Note: Written, just as the four constituent congregations joined to form one new congregation in Eastern Southend (and just as England's World Cup campaign falters once more).*

Well, we are here at last. After the speculation in the press, four years or more of preparations, and for some of us decades of waiting and praying, that time is upon us. No, I'm not referring to the World Cup! By the time you read this, we will be worshipping together on one site – no longer simply one in name and one in constitution, but now one in body as well. And I'm looking forward to the exciting times ahead. However, that's not to say that I'm that not a little afraid as well.

As a Scotsman watching the World Cup, I got a bit of an insight to what it might be like for an observer from another congregation as we prepare for life together. There has been the anticipation of all the good things that are going to come with success, the concerns and questions about leadership with the coach resigning, the sheer panic that ensued over the fitness of key players... and in the background there are still worries about the building of a new home for the team.

There have been those who thought it was all over even before the plane took off, never mind a ball kicked, and those who see the shining light at the end of the tunnel – the Promised Land, not only in sight but already with the "Sold" sign on it! It was confirmed in May that the Metropolitan Police and the Football Association had finalised plans for the route of the open-top bus for England's victory parade.

Then, when the team was announced for the first game, there was more concern – why has he chosen him? And when the first shot was struck towards England's goal, heads were in hands and the chants changed to "We're coming home, we're coming home, England's coming home!" Why do we let our emotions get so carried away? The highs and the lows, the dreams and the nightmares, the aspirations and the fears, all mixed up together.

If we can take any lessons from the World Cup then let us remember these simple points.

1. Just like football, the work of the church does not depend on one or two key players – this is about a team pulling together for a common cause, and we are all in that team.

2. The Boss has got a vision in mind for the future, we just have to listen to Him and put it into action. (And unlike England, we have the confidence that the Boss who has taken us here will lead us through all future challenges.)
3. We've had a season of preparation and a time of initial familiarisation; the "warm-up matches" are over. But the real work starts now. Let's take nothing for granted – we have to accept that it's not going to be easy. But if we give our all and we all pull together then we can pull it off.

And if we remember all this and put it into action to the best of our ability then one day we'll be united in that glorious chant "We're coming home, we're coming home" as we join the parade to our own new home. (Let's just make sure we don't get the same builders as Wembley!)

"They think it's all over..." It's only just begun!

## **Jesus, the Answer**

I was looking for the friendly faces  
In the midst of the angry crowd,  
I was looking for the quiet places  
In a world where everything's loud.

I was looking for loving and happiness,  
I was looking for a reason to sing,  
But I don't have to look any further, Lord,  
For in you I've found everything.

I've found the peace and tranquility  
'Midst the turmoil and the strife.  
I've found the happiness I felt lacking  
In all aspects of my life.

I've found solutions to all my problems,  
The answer to all my prayers.  
And at times of trouble it's good to know  
That you're the answer that's always there.

## Appreciating the Stillness

On the journey to work this morning, I was extremely conscious of the stillness that is to be found in those quiet corners of life when we take the time to look for them. Stillness which we have the opportunity to share on Retreats and, perhaps, on Sundays: and stillness which seems to vanish all too soon come Monday morning. Or does it?

The word “still” is one of those peculiarities of the English language – a word with a multiple meanings. Two definitions (from a list of 20 in the dictionary) are:

1. to calm, appease, or allay (e.g. to still a craving);
2. in the future as in the past.

Both of these relate to the nature of God.

In the midst of the business of life, is there anything more calming than the nature of God? The trouble, for me, is finding that place (both physically and mentally) where I can escape the breaking waves of daily life and find those still waters.

And while the waves of life crash around us, it is good to know that our Rock is solid - yesterday, today and tomorrow. And that is the “stillness” of God – the eternal constancy of our Lord.

So take time today to seek out and appreciate the stillness that is to be found in and with God.

Lord,

Help me find that quiet place to hear Your still, small voice of calm today. In the midst of the busyness that is my daily life, set aside time and space for You and take me to it. And as You lead me beside the still waters, help me to appreciate that stillness.

## **Still - in the Bleak Mid-Winter**

In the bleak mid-winter, I wake and all is calm,  
'Til the still of night is broken by the 5:15 alarm.  
The breakfast news and weather disturb the restful hush  
And I chase my tail around the flat to beat the morning rush.

In the bleak mid-winter, commuters brave the chill,  
And all along the platform, everything is still.  
Half-asleep and grumbling we impatiently await,  
For snow has fallen, snow on snow, and the morning train is late.

In the bleak mid-winter, the train when it appears  
Brings warmth for weary travellers like music to our ears.  
And as it leaves the station, the wheels against the rails  
Find their perfect rhythm and the sanctuary prevails.

In the bleak mid-winter, the first of morning light  
Greets us with frosty glow as we wave goodbye to night.  
The glow across the estuary that runs along beside  
Is still - no waves to speak of, just a slowly turning tide.

In the bleak mid-winter, in the city we arrive,  
The stillness yet to be disturbed when business comes alive.  
The east-end street are dormant, the waterways serene;  
How long before the industry disrupts this peaceful scene?

But even midst the turmoil, serenity is here  
For those who want to find it, for those who'll hold it dear.  
For in this world of madness, when your "going through the mill",  
There's sanctuary in knowing that, in all things, God is still.

In the bleak mid-winter, when all is still around,  
Where snow has fallen, snow on snow, and frost lies on the ground,  
Enjoy that perfect stillness, the air of calm, the mood,  
And as the day disturbs the peace remember God is good.

## **The View from the Bridge**

Standing up on the bridge on the pathway of life,  
Watching the torrent rush by,  
Looking onto the stream as it rushes along,  
And wondering to myself "Why?"

Surrounded by beauty, creation's great wonders,  
You just have to pause for a thought.  
But the river won't wait, pulling others along  
To the end that's so eagerly sought.

I think again "Why?", then it catches my eye,  
It seems I'm no longer alone,  
For just up ahead stopped dead in its tracks  
Is a twig that's got stuck on a stone.

It struggles a while, trying hard to get back  
In the river still rushing at speed,  
But then it looks round and sees all the beauty,  
And thinks to itself "What's the need?"

I move on once more down the banks of the river,  
Overtaken again by the race,  
But as the stream rushes by, I'm still plodding along  
Taking life at my own steady pace.

For when they break free of the hurries of life,  
Then they'll just be lost in the sea,  
And they'll miss all the beauty as they're racing along.  
No, this speed is ample for me.

## **Fruitless Hours?**

Every day I spend what seems to me endless hours on a train, fruitless hours when I am too pre-occupied to let my mind be still, but too easily distracted by the chatter and the music and too tired to be productive. So I sit on the train staring out of the window, watching as the world passes by.

The view from the train is mostly urban, housing and commercial buildings either side of the line. But alongside the track there is a belt of green - creation pointing to the works of the Creator. The blossom on the trees signals new life. Further on there is more greenery - parks and gardens, woodland and water, nature in abundance.

Beside the track there is litter and graffiti - mankind's mark on the landscape, a scar. Rubble and the debris of rail works make me wonder just how much more green space there would be if it was not for mankind's desperate urge to get from A to B in the shortest time. I remember reading that Barking station at its peak served 120 trains per hour. What did that do to this planet?

The variety in the quality of housing highlights the disparity in wealth and quality of life amongst the population. How did we let it get like this?

But in the gardens of those rundown terraced houses, the laundry hangs on the line - baby's clothes alongside shirts and a skirt, signs of a family home. And as the train draws into the station, cars are waiting to collect the commuters and, inside those cars, children eagerly await the sight of mummy or daddy emerging from the train.

The blossom scattered on the platform will bear no fruit there; but this is a mere fraction of the blossom that fell. Likewise, the "endless hours" spent commuting represent a tiny fraction of the many hours I have to enjoy. And as the train draws out of the station, the draft it creates causes a portion of the blossom to blow onto the grass with a fresh hope. Fruitless hours? Perhaps not.

## Fitting Everything In

*Question:* Why is it that whatever I have to do, and whenever I have to do it, there are always umpteen other things that seem to crop up just at that very moment?

*(Answer:* It's usually because I just didn't get them done when I ought to have done!)

At 0430 tomorrow morning I am being picked up to go to the airport for a week in Jersey and the packing is nearly done - alleluia! Passport, tickets, medication, clothes, hiking boots, reading matter - I've got to fit in my TLS studying somewhere - soap-bag, yes I think that's just about it. Good job someone bought me a pocket bible this year - it fits the last little gap perfectly.

In the daily routine that is life today, with the commute to London, a short burst in the gym before work, and a long slow commute home at the end of the working day - followed by meetings, meetings and more meetings - how often do I treat God like I treat my bible? I squeezing Him into a space that is insufficient, not devoting the time He really merits to delve into Him and explore all those facets of Him that you only get to know when you look for them.

Lord, help me today to find time to really explore You as I explore your creation around. Help me to give You the first slice of my time and not the last crumbs of leftovers. You were there in the beginning of time; be there at the beginning of my days, the first thing on my mind. You will be there at the end of time; be there at the end of each day, as I reflect all that I have seen of You in the world around me. Lord, help me to find those moments of peace and tranquility in the midst of my hectic life. Forgive me Lord for squeezing You into the corner of a bag - You deserve so much better. And thank you that You are prepared to occupy whatever humble stable I offer You today.

## Time and Space - the Final Frontiers

Why did that driver park his car so far over as to prevent anyone parking beside him?

And why does he complain about the traffic congestion when he could have eased the problem by sharing his car with a colleague?

Why does the pedestrian with no need to rush forget that others may wish to overtake him?

And why does the commuter in the dash for the train find the need to trample on the traveler who is holding him up?

Why on a train full to bursting does she need a seat for her handbag?

And why are the seats with extra leg-room always taken by the passengers with the shortest legs?

Why, in our quest for our own little place in the country, do we build towns in those open spaces that remain?

Why, when You remove the noise of the day do I find the need to fill those silences with the sound of my voice?

Why can I find forty pounds for a football ticket when I cannot spare a single quid for charity?

Why, in a world where time is a premium and space is on everyone's wish list, do we seem unable to treasure the moments You give us?

Why in a mile of green hedgerow is there a sudden explosion of colour with a solitary purple headed flower at the centre? A reminder of You in our midst, surrounded by Your creation?

Why 2000 years after you walked on the earth, teaching peace and love, are we still ripping Your creation apart in our wars?

Why, when You know what we are like, did You go to the Cross of Calvary? For us?

*Yes, for you my child – because I **do** know what you are like.  
I know what I made, and I know the good that there is in you.*

Why can I find an hour in evening to watch television, when I cannot spare five minutes to spend with You Lord?

Why, when You invite me to share with You in every moment of every day can I only find a moment on a Sunday for You?

My wish Lord? I wish I could find time to tell you.

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