



from Garth...

Listen to the poet

For some reason on New Year's Day I woke up with words of Bob Dylan on my mind. Beautiful and very strong words from the song "Every Grain of Sand." I think he deserved the Nobel literature prize for this song alone! The words were these:

**In the fury of the moment,
I have seen the master's hand,
In every leaf that trembles,
In every grain of sand.**

These words, indeed this song has a foundational feel. What I mean is that it is a reminder of an understanding of God that is at the heart of our world and our being; for the start of a New Year words that provide an anchor are helpful.

Poets can be very helpful in laying down markers and guiding us to see life in balance. I feel this could as well have been William Blake as Bob Dylan, and I treasure those poetic moments that give us strength.

How about this one from Kris Kristofferson from the beginning of his song "Love is the way,"

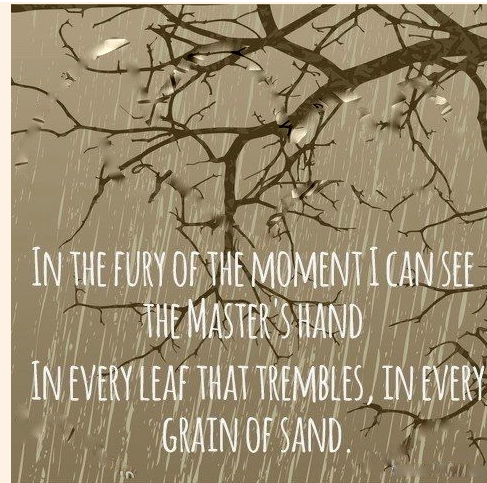
**Deep in the heart of the infinite darkness
A tiny blue marble is spinning through space,
Born in the splendour of God's holy vision,
And sliding away like a tear down his face.**

What an unbelievable start to a song!

Poetic moments put things in perspective -

as we were driving yesterday, Jeremy Irons was reading the poems of TS Eliot on the BBC - what a lovely gift. I find that these little moments of poetry can often help to put life in perspective, and **if you are searching for inspiration at the moment go and have a listen to 'Every Grain of Sand' by Bob Dylan!** It is a strong song of hope.

(My favourite version is the one on his album "Shot of Love")



to hear the song on Vimeo click on this image

To see the full lyrics [click here](#)

Be prepared to shout the "P" word!

I heard a wonderful story yesterday that is both an encouragement and a challenge for a new year. Ingrid Van Loo Plowman was in a Dutch church where the vicar prayed for Syria, Iraq and... Israel. As he paused she shouted out loud in this big church "Palestina", and the vicar quickly responded "en de Palestijnen."

She says she doesn't know what gave her the courage - I know Ingrid, and know that she is deeply committed to issues of compassion and justice particularly working with refugees, but recently she was in Palestine doing a bike ride for [Medical Aid for Palestinians](#). I was very thrilled to hear the news of what she did and our friends in Palestine will also be encouraged. **When we refuse to let the forgotten be forgotten it is a moment of hope.**

We enter a time of ever greater uncertainty for the Palestinians - obviously the Trump presidency is going to be very committed to current Israeli government policies and it may require people to be speaking or shouting the "P" word which so many politicians hesitate to use. So I think Ingrid has reminded us - **don't be afraid to speak up, because when we do so we speak up for humanity, we speak up for equality, we speak up for justice.**

Violating human rights... not permissible anymore



Rev Dr Mitri Raheb, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem

The great theologian and pastor from Bethlehem, Mitri Raheb, made a fascinating comment when the UN Security Council spoke up about Israeli settlements. He said this,

"Fifteen countries at the UN Security Council spoke about International Law and human rights condemning Israeli settlements, and the Israeli ambassador spoke only about Israel's divine rights 'in the Bible.' As we celebrate Christmas we declare boldly that the Divine who became human in Bethlehem made human rights divine. **Violating human rights**

in the name of any religious text is not permissible anymore."

I was moved to read this. My prayer for Christmas Eve, which I have put on the [Peace at Christmas](#) album, includes lines once again sparked off by a poem. It refers to the fact that on Christmas Eve my family often

"... read a poem of John Betjeman,
and I am always moved as we come to those words,
'and is it true and is it true..."

The maker of the stars and sea become a child on earth for me."

And he asserts that if this is so,
"Nothing can compare with this truth, and I find it hard to carry on,
because there is nothing more to say,
because it reveals that you are the God with such a precious love for humanity,
so we must cherish human rights..."

You are the God of the forgotten and insignificant,
and therefore there is hope for all and we too are shown how to live..."

You affirmed humanity in Bethlehem... and still do today."

And Mitri in his statement does exactly the same - he affirms humanity in Bethlehem, speaking with a prophetic voice that we must learn to emulate and to say very loudly: "**Violating human rights in the name of any religious text is not permissible anymore."**

Words from Thomas Merton

On the 23rd of December I was doing a concert in Saunton Studio in Braunton, Devon. That day I had just heard future President Trump affirming nuclear weapons and saying "Let's have an arms race." It was shocking to hear these words and I quoted them in the concert and sensed that everyone felt the same. I then sang "Tell 'em About the Dream Martin" that reflects the prophetic words that Martin Luther King spoke, of hope, non-violence and peace.

I often read Thomas Merton and keep a book of his beside my bed, and these words jumped out at me - particularly after hearing Trump's words:

"The real job is to lay the groundwork for a deep change of heart on the part of the whole nation, so that one day it can really go through the metanoia we need for a peaceful world..."

I'm not a pure pacifist in theory, though today in practice I don't see how one can be anything else, since limited wars (however "just") present an almost certain danger of nuclear war on an all out scale. It is absolutely clear to me that we are faced with the obligation, both as human beings and as Christians, of striving in every way possible to abolish war." And he believes we should be building a community of people who would be "sacraments" or signs of the peace.

I'm not sure when these words were written, but sometime in the 1960s, and they have become extremely relevant again. And not only the States should concern us, but our own country. The



Scottish National Party have urged the British Government to abandon "knee-jerk militarism" and Alex Salmond said, "For the UK government the New Year should be one of recognising and correcting the errors in their foreign policy approach, and one where they adopt a more ethical and effective approach that abandons military obsession and instead puts humanitarian and political efforts at its core."

He went on, "You cannot arm regimes with stained military tactics with one hand, and then raise the other to proclaim the need to uphold human rights."

The [Campaign Against the Arms Trade](#) have also spoken up on this issue - Andrew Smith said that arms exports had "fuelled a humanitarian catastrophe... Militarism and war must give way to an approach that provides humanitarian relief for those in need and promotes peace and democracy."

I am regularly inspired by the newsletter of a friend in Bethlehem called **Mazim Qumsiyeh** and interestingly in his latest newsletter he is also quoting Thomas Merton, reminding us where Christ is to be found:

"Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it - because he is out of place in it, and yet must be in it - his place is with those others who do not belong, who are rejected because they are regarded as weak; and with those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, and are tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is not room, Christ is present in this world. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst."

Prayer - Thank You for Poets and Prophets

Oh God, as we come to this time of Epiphany we remember that it is a time of revelation and realisation -

a time when eyes are opened.

So we thank you for the poets and the prophets who warm our hearts and open our eyes.

The poets providing a foundation - giving us a place to stand.

And the prophets inspiring us -

to be the activists of justice and hope.

May our lives reflect our confidence in you -

and our willingness to shout out the prophetic words when needed -

and to live lives that witness to non-violence and peace.

Amen



Goth Hewitt

If this newsletter has been forwarded to you by a friend, or if you have found it on Facebook or elsewhere on the internet, and you would like to receive it direct to your own inbox, [sign up here](#)

GARTH HEWITT

Troubadour, gospel singer, protest singer...



[music](#) [books](#) [events](#) [spirituality](#) [bio](#) [video](#) [articles](#) [amos](#) [GHF](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

RECEIVE GARTH'S NEWSLETTER

SUPPORT the GHF

Explore Garth's website here to find more of his resources, to follow him on Facebook or Twitter, or to find out where he will be in 2017

©2017 Garth Hewitt Foundation | 186 Hykeham Road, Lincoln, LN6 8AP

Web Version

Forward

Unsubscribe

Powered by [Mad Mimi](#)®

A GoDaddy® company