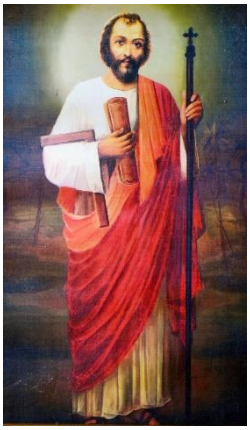
Reflections on 'St. Thomas the Apostle –7th July 2021 – prepared by Rob

Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We have included some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation. If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate at 7.30pm on Wednesday in the physical space of the meditation room at Wisdom Centre. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: Eternal God, through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, stability, peace and justice making. **Amen**



Introduction: This week I would like to say a little about St Thomas whose feast day was on Saturday - the anniversary of his martyrdom at Mylapore, India in 72 CE – and also, with the assistance of Hugh McGregor Ross a little about the Gospel of Thomas which is one of my favourite books on spirituality.

In the Bible, St Thomas is mentioned most in St John's Gospel. It was he who asked Jesus how they could know the way, to which Jesus replied "I am the way and the truth and the life". He is best known as "Doubting Thomas" because of doubting that Jesus had risen from the dead, which was, perhaps, understandable. In the Bible he is always referred to as Thomas, the Twin (Didymus in Greek), possibly because the readers might not have known that the word "Thomas" actually means "twin" in Syriac and Aramaic, and was already his nickname. His real name was Judas. There has been speculation about whether he was one of a twin, and it has even been suggested that he was Jesus's twin brother, but although Jesus had a brother called Judas he did not have a twin. The most likely explanation is that Jesus gave him that nickname for being his "twin" , because they were so similar in outlook and understanding.

According to tradition, after the crucifixion, Thomas travelled to India, arriving in about 52 CE and established seven churches there. McGregor Ross writes: "There is a very strong tradition that by the year 52 Thomas reached Muziris (now Cranganore) on the Malabar Coast of south-west India and started to establish his apostolic Church. It is known Jews were then settled there, and the oldest synagogue, dating from that period, still stands in nearby Cochin and is in use. The traditions tell of Thomas having a difficult time to begin with, but slowly winning acceptance, including support of important people, until he had set up seven churches in places that can be identified. He then moved over the hills towards the east, going near to what is now Madras, setting up more churches until finally he was martyred in 72 A.D. His tomb is still venerated, with a big celebration each year. That whole Church, now called the Apostolic Church of Thomas is linked to five other Eastern Orthodox Churches, and is very much alive although probably rather different in its doctrines and liturgy from its early days."

The Gospel of Thomas

The gospel is really a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus called "logia". The gospel is not canonical, and was, indeed condemned as heretical by Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome in the early third century, and probably also

by others leading to virtually all copies being destroyed, possibly because it was believed to be a Gnostic text. We are fortunate that a complete copy written in Coptic (an invented language) was literally unearthed with other texts in a jar near the village of Nag Hammadi on the Nile in 1945. Had it not survived so long in the soil it too would have been destroyed, but fortunately it survived long enough to avoid the intolerance of people with fixed views whether Christian or Muslim.

The gospel is neither heretical nor Gnostic. Many of the logia have parallels to words, parables and teachings attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels, but they are simpler, suggesting an earlier and perhaps more accurate rendering and they have a profundity which helps to enrich and explain the canonical record. Some of the logia use metaphors, allegories and ideas which are difficult for us to understand in modern times, and possibly always were. This is indicative of the fact that whilst the teachings are in one sense simple, they are not easy to put into words, and even more difficult to practice. They logia have, in fact, the marks and signs of having been written by someone who understood the sayings of Jesus much more deeply and authentically than others have.

Connectivity: As always with genuine spirituality, the central message is connection and oneness. I would like to provide a flavour of the gospel by presenting some of the logia from McGregor Ross's translation. I will do so under two themes of connectivity – the vertical theme i.e. connectivity through the continuum of time or timelessness and the horizontal theme i.e. connectivity with the whole environment through space. I was hoping to have been able to do this in person in Wisdom House, but the extension of the Covid restrictions has made this impossible. I would suggest, however, that after reading each logion it may be helpful to pause for a while to ingest and reflect on the teaching.

Vertical Theme

Logion 17
Jesus said:
I will give you what no eye has seen,
and what no ear has heard,
and what no hand has touched,
and what has not arisen in the heart of man.



Logion 18
The disciples said to Jesus:
Tell us in what way our end will be.
Jesus said:
Have you therefore discerned the beginning
in order that you seek after the end?
for in the Place where the beginning is,
there will be the end.
Happy is he who will stand boldly at the beginning,
he shall know the end,
and shall not taste death.



Logion 19
Jesus said:
Happy is he who already was
before he is.
If you become my disciples
and hear my logia,
these stones will minister to you.
For you have five trees in Paradise
which are unchanged in summer and winter
and their leaves do not fall away.

He who knows them
shall not taste death.

McGregor Ross writes of the above logia: "…it is more than a continuity within time; more specifically the real Self is independent of time. Such Life is not merely immortal, but rather is outside of the concept of time, and so is independent of death."

Horizontal Theme

Logion 3
Jesus said:
If those who guide your Being say to you:
"Behold the Kingdom is in the heaven,
then the birds of the sky will precede you;
if they say to you: "It is in the sea",
then the fish will precede you.
But the Kingdom is in your centre
and is about you.
When you know yourselves
then you will be known,
and you will be aware that you are
the sons of the Living Father.
But if you do not know yourselves
then you are in poverty,
and you are the poverty.

Logion 24
His disciples said:
Show us the place where you are,
because it is necessary for us to seek after it.
He said to them:
He who has ears let him hear:
There is light
at the centre of a man of light,
and he illumines the whole world.
If he does not shine,
there is darkness.

Logion 25
Jesus said:
Love your brother even as your own soul,
guard him
even as the pupil of your eye.

Logion 48
Jesus said:
If two make peace with each other
in this single house,
they will say to the mountain
"Move away"
and it shall move.

Logion 113
His disciples said to him:
On which day will the Kingdom come?
Jesus said: It will not come by expectation.
They will not say:
"Behold, it is here!"
or "Behold, there!"
But the Kingdom of the Father is spread out over the earth
and men do not see it.

Logion 50
Jesus said:
If they say to you
"Where are you from?"
say to them
"We came from the light
there, where the light was,
by itself.
It stood boldly
and manifested itself in their image".
If they say to you: "Who are you?"
say: "We are His sons
and we are the chosen of the Living Father".
If they question you:
"What is the sign of your Father in you?"
say to them:
"It is a movement with a repose".

Reflection and Preparation for Meditation: I deliberately left Logion 50 until last, because the last line "It is a movement with a repose" is a wonderful description of our meditation practice. Meditation is not passive. The "movement" is the transformation of the heart, and the "repose" is the ending of conflict and duality. This is the hub at the centre of the turning wheel, radiating energy but remaining still.

As we move into a comfortable position and relax the body for our formal practice, we may be able to make contact with that place of transformation and stillness. Letting go of the efforts, difficulties, triumphs and worries of our day, and bringing ourselves into the peace of the present moment. Noticing our breathing as it slows and deepens. Giving attention to any points of tension or discomfort in the body. If you use a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps co-ordinating it with the rhythm of the breathing. Or you may wish simply to focus on a candle or to follow the breath. Returning to our meditation object or point of focus whenever we are aware of the mind wandering off, in a spirit of non-judgmental acceptance. With gratitude to the beings of light who are our guides, including Jesus and St Thomas, his spiritual twin.

We will meditate together for 25 minutes.

Post Meditation Logion

Logion 77
Jesus said:
I am the light that is above them all.
I am the All.
The All comes forth from me,
and the All reaches towards me.
Cleave the wood, I am there;
lift up the stone,
and you shall find me there.

Resources:

The Gospel of Thomas Presented by Hugh McGregor Ross, Element Books
Thirty Essays on the Gospel of Thomas – Hugh McGregor Ross, Element Books
Images – Various sources

Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Moments of your personal prayer follow…**Amen.**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon. Stay safe and well.



Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.