

Not about me

Lamentations 3:19-26

“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; Therefore I will wait for him.’ The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” (NIV)

Lying Awake is a short novel about a successful and devout Nun who is forced to relearn her spirituality after an intense time of darkness. Below is a pivotal scene in the book in which Sister John of the Cross is receiving counsel from Father Aaron. Their exchange can speak to how we often miss the point of the spiritual life.

Father Aaron’s chin rested against his chest... she couldn’t see whether his eyes were open or closed

“Father?”

He raised his head slowly and began to swell in his chair like a balloon receiving an infusion of helium. “Take heart Sister! He boomed. “You may feel separated from grace right now, but in reality you are probably closer to it now that you ever were before.”

She hadn’t expected to hear this. “How could that be?”

“Because we’re all better off having doubts about the state of our souls than presuming ourselves to be holy.” His eyebrows moved ominously... “You allowed yourself to think that loving God meant enjoying his company... It was all about *you*, wasn’t it?” But loving God is supposed to be all about *Him*. About trusting Him, putting yourself in His hands completely,” He sank back into the chair, folding his arms over his stomach... “The problem is, you’re still looking out for number one. What comes before the number one, Sister?”...

“Zero.”

He nodded. “That’s right. Which is the same as infinity. If we subtract ourselves from the equation, we find that God is left... I am recommending an attitude, which I’ll sum up like this: God first, others second, me last. As long as you stick to that, you can be assured you’ll make the right decision.”

Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake*

Point for Prayer:

In what ways do you interact with God and others that is really all about you? In what ways do you genuinely put God and others above yourself?