

Personal Reflection – July 21, 2022

Thanks and Praise

Jeanette and I enjoyed a delightful Zoom chat for an hour this morning: no agenda, just delight together. As usual a great deal of mutual learning emerged!

At one point our conversation turned a sharp corner and I found myself quoting Walter Brueggeman (surprise!). We were talking about the amazing mutuality of learning that occurs in a kind, effective dialogue. I said, “I’ve often said, my life now is simply *thanks & praise*. In one of his books, Walter showed how the Psalms seem to refer to *thanks* with reference to a *specific* reason or object; the same Psalms speak of *praise* as *generalized*.

So, my prayer is this: ‘Thank you for this Zoom with Jeanette. I praise You, Amen.’ *Thanks*: for specific gifts. *Praise*: just because You are You. General.

Maybe *lavish affirmation* needs to be thanks to a learner for his particular effort. ‘Thank you, Josh, I never saw that connection before.’ ‘Thank you, Ellen. That was a gentle way of including everyone.’

I have a sense there is deeper dialogue here. Let’s try it and see how it feels for leader and for learner.

I must confess, I always felt a bit unreal when I would say to learners, ‘Well done! Excellent! Very good!’ in an effort to offer affirmation. Who was I to make that judgement? Perhaps saying ‘Thank you for how you phrased that. I never heard it said that way before,’ would show our mutual learning and affirm her efforts. Perhaps. Let’s try it on.

And thank you, Walter!

--Jane Vella