

## Silence and Honeycakes session 3.

*March 24, 11am – 12 noon.*

Welcome to Silence and Honeycakes, in a time of isolation. Session 3 is focused on Chapter 3 – Fleeing - and I have given it the subtitle Taking Full Responsibility for Yourself.

It is strangely apt. For all of our planning and hypothesising, sometimes the desert forces itself upon us. Its impacts are unwelcome and unexpected. We see all of our addictions and favoured distractions in much sharper focus.

Plan:

- intro quote; today's question
- silence for 5 mins
- summary / points to consider
- pause for thought
- reading from p66
- pause for thought
- additional questions
- pause for thought
- email me [events@whirlowspiritualitycentre](mailto:events@whirlowspiritualitycentre) with any observations or questions you'd like me to share with the whole group. I'll circulate these by email, with people's names
- closing quote
- silence for 2 mins
- ends

I will now read a quote from one of the desert fathers, plus today's focus question, and we will spend 5 minutes in silence.

- Intro quote and today's question:

'One day, as Abba Macarius was dismissing the gathering, he said to the brothers at Scetis, 'Flee, brethren!' One of the old men asked him, 'Where could we flee to that is further away than this desert?' Macarius put his finger to his lips and said, 'Flee that'. And off he went to his cell, shut the door and sat down.' *Macarius, from Alphabetical Collection*

Is there a situation or person to which you cling for comfort, that you might be invited to let go? If so, spend some time with the feelings that arise when you consider doing this.

*Silence for 5 mins.*

- Summary / points to consider:

It brought tears to my eyes, reading that question: Is there a situation to which you cling for comfort, that you might be invited to let go? Wow. And the invitation, right now, is more of an instruction.

Fleeing here is not at all about escape but it is the *refusal to run away* from yourself and the reality of your life. The things we are invited – forced! – to get away from are the distractions that allow us

to escape who we really are, in God and in community. We do not escape, we 'flee' into our cell where we must face up to our responsibilities and human nature.

'Run from the company that will make you feel better', Williams writes. And, again, I think – wow.

One of the things we might think about helpfully escaping is others' false views about us – of projection. Our teachers from the desert might have run away when others tried to put them on a pedestal. We might also consider the times we avoid facing up to our own wounds and sin by willingly accepting a distracting request from someone else to help heal theirs – on occasions when this prevents their growth or allows them to blame us for their own wounds or sinfulness. It doesn't serve either of us.

Williams addresses specifically the temptations of ordination in relation to this. Part of which is to do with the license to speak that comes with ordination.

He describes silence as a form of flight that does many of us good. As an expectant quiet, before the word of God is spoken. Silence is recommended because it is so easy to use words to cover up deep truth, to use them carelessly. Most of us still live in that place where the easiest thing to say in most situations is the thing that shores up our ego; that distracts us and others from the truth; that keeps us away from love and from God.

Instead, the desert mothers and fathers invite us to actively search for the word of God in our neighbour, to hesitate, and to respond reverently.

Our flight, then, is really towards rather than away from something. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, staying put is important and does not oppose this kind of 'fleeing': often, they happen at the same time.

We flee towards ourselves, towards truth, towards the creation of something good. Away from compulsion, enslavement; the false self. This involves leaving things behind, which might sound and feel like sacrifice. It is. It is also a celebration.

- pause for thought
- reading from handout p66
- pause for thought
- Additional questions:
  1. What are the distractions in your life? Do you ever consider fleeing from any of these? Why / why not? PAUSE
  2. What do you feel about the idea of fleeing towards greater responsibility for yourself? What might this look like, for you? PAUSE
  3. How does silence feature in your life, if at all? Does it feel like a positive type of fleeing – or like something else? PAUSE
  4. Main question - Is there a situation or person to which you cling for comfort, that you might be invited to let go? PAUSE

- Email me. Ending now
- closing quote

“Abba Isaiah asked Abba Macarius to give him a word. The old man said, ‘Flee from human company’. Abba Isaiah said, ‘But what does it mean to flee from human company?’ The old man said, ‘It means sitting in your cell and weeping for your sins.’ ” *Macarius, from Alphabetical Collection*

*Silence 2 mins. Singing bowl to end.*

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