

# Talk by Gretchen Stevens at the annual CM conference at Stirling 2009

## HEARTSONG

### LEADING THE MIND INTO THE HEART: THE PATH OF CHRISTIAN MEDITATION.

It's a bit daunting to be the last speaker of the day, after Shanida and Stefan have been so informative and inspirational. You wonder what you can possibly say that they haven't already said better.

So I decided not to rise to that challenge and instead I am going to lower the tone. It started with Liz asking me for a title to this talk. I gave her 2 or 3 choices and they all sounded like titles for Country and Western songs. We finally settled on one word—heartsong—so that I couldn't get carried away. But it didn't really work. I got carried away anyway. Now, even if you don't like Hillbilly music (and I suspect you don't), stay with me. I am not going to sing Possum Up a Gum Stump to you, even though it's a natural reference for me from a youth partly spent in the Ozark Mountains. This was in the Fifties when Mother Maybelle and the Carter sisters were travelling the little towns like Blue Eye, Cricket and Flippin, singing on the front porch or in church. Johnny Cash was about set to get himself into trouble and the Grand Ole Opry was the cultural highlight of the week. It's a bit of a secret indulgence, but if you happen on the Centre for Complementary Care when there are no clients and I am locked in my office with my computer, you are likely to hear the faint strains of Johnny Paycheck singing "Take this Job and Shove it" or "I'm the only Hell my Mother ever Raised." Not especially edifying perhaps, but very cheering while writing funding applications.

Yes, but what has this to do with meditation and healing and Leading the Mind in to the Heart? Quite a bit, in a kind of off-hand way. There is an old, gnarled hobo bluesman, called Seasick Steve, who now lives in Norway, plays a ropey 3-stringed guitar and sings like he's been living in the bottom of a barrel of beer for about a hundred years. This may not be far from the truth. Anyway, He has weirdly come back into fashion and now and then shares his on-the-road philosophy with his fans. The man is a model of travelling light!

One of his songs is called, "I started out with nothing and I've still got most of it left." Isn't that excellent? I think it would make a great

motto for the Centre for Complementary Care, where I work and which survives on a wing and a prayer and manages to scrape by with very little visible means of support. And that title does nicely, too, as an expression of the poverty of spirit that informs meditation as it gradually strips away the superfluous from our lives. We started out with nothing and still have most of it left. Yeehaw and amen, brothers and sisters.

So, there I was in Seasick Steve mode when I first considered our theme in preparation for this talk.

Leading the mind into the heart. Well. Good idea but hard to manage. You recall the old adage that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. It's not always that simple to even get him underway for the leading bit. I pictured the recalcitrant mind as a wild-eyed mule tugged along towards the territory of the heart, bellowing and balking at every step, at best following in a noticeable if silent sulk. Leading the Mind into the Heart may not be as gentle an exercise as it sounds. We have a long road to go and that road is often rough and unmade.

When I thought a bit more about it, it struck me as an apt illustration of the process of healing, as well as meditation. They are parallel disciplines, I think, and the path is a familiar one, where the two merge pretty early on along the way. The journey is often a reluctant pilgrimage as we mulishly drag our feet and delay our own progress.

In healing, I find this expressed as a sort of tug of war within the clients, who arrive initially in search of succour while in the throes of illness, often of a serious or chronic nature. They are surprised that healing by gentle touch is actually and immediately effective, but are unprepared for the internal conflict it sets up, not unlike the strong conflicting pull we feel between meditation and distraction.

In healing sessions, the tension is not between the client and me, but between the controlling mind and the releasing power of love, somehow transmitted by touch. It can be pretty uncomfortable and sometimes requires a lot of reassurance to keep the client coming back for more until we reach the tipping point where worse becomes better. The mind does not want to give over and struggles to keep control, even if that control is damaging the health. How we prefer the devil we know! I always suggest that we begin with a commitment to four sessions, because that gives us at least a chance to change the pattern of will power and over-thinking that gets us in so much trouble.

And the same thing occurs with meditation. We cannot help but notice that when we gather together to meditate or when we sit alone in our own corner, we begin at the far point of noise and busy-ness,

unquiet in every sense. Because that's where we live our everyday, superficial lives. In speed and chaos, confusion and stress. There is much mind and very little heart in our landscape. This is clearly not an ideal launching pad for the discovery of poise, peace and meaning. But it is where we are and what we are, spiritual embodiments of the truth of that old saw: To get there, you shouldn't start from here. Not unaided, at any rate. To reach the heart of our matter, we must find and negotiate the path, which is so faint and overlaid with thorny discord that unless we follow the tracks of those who have preceded us down the path, we soon lose heart. To try it without direction would be to wander again in a wilderness, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century equivalent of the Children of Israel impatient for the milk and honey, clueless and cross at their abandonment. Except for Moses, I guess they would still be adrift in the desert. And except for the great traditions of meditation and contemplation, so might we.

It has to be said, though, that anxious as we are to escape the enslavement of the world, we don't leave familiar territory willingly. Not even for the deeply desired consolations of the Promised Land. We would quite like to wake one morning and find ourselves translated into the still heart of the rose, but in the interim we choose to live in our conscious, rickety brains as much as possible. Fortunately for our salvation, it isn't always possible to do that. If blind will power and stubborn thought could overcome all, we would stampede straight into the fire and burn ourselves in an orgy of self-destruction. We try, of course.... Sometimes succeed, but happily mostly fail. We take this failure for weakness, when in fact it is deliverance.

We value strength, so we pretend that we can direct our lives through decisions and discretion and resolution, with a small concession to grace when we find ourselves in trouble. We ought, we think, be able to take ourselves by force, but it all comes apart when we are asleep or stricken by love or fear or grief. That's when the demons arrive, when we face the big questions, and have no answers. Problem-solving creatures that we are, we don't like "No Answers". We like, "Oh look, here's one I made earlier. All it needs is a little tweak and a bit of sticky tape to make it serviceable for This, Here, Now." When tragic life intervenes and we are shocked out of our certainties, the heart takes over, at least temporarily, but mostly we prefer the illusion (for it is an illusion) that we can be and are in control. Living in the head. We judge our progress through life by how much of it we can understand and explain through reason. It is no easy task to wrench ourselves away from that conceit and travel from the mind to the heart, but it is the way and the only way so we have no option but to go there, by hook or by crook.

We know that we'll know what we're seeking when we find it, and we know that we'll know when we've found it when for the first time we

hear our own heartsong, recognising what we've never heard before as our truest self.

That journey, towards the lost music we seek to recover, is hauntingly described in a contemporary poem by Katrina Porteous. She lives in a Northumberland village and writes mostly about the dwindling fishing community. In this poem, *The Lost Music*, she writes to all of us setting out in trust, if not quite in faith, to reclaim our spiritual birthright.

### **THE LOST MUSIC**

**There is a place where it is all recorded,  
Each look, each touch and kiss, each word, discarded  
As casually as rain into the sea,  
Is treasured there, and waits to be recovered.**

**The keeper of this place is known to you  
From long ago. And yet he has no past**

**And makes no plan, and feels no weight of loss,  
No fear, only moment by moment loses  
A stream of random and beautiful  
Notes without music.**

**Now, in the dark place, each of us forgotten,  
We cry out for him to come down and save us.**

**Like the architects of buildings we shall not see,  
The planners of gardens and the planters of trees  
That will not be grown in our own children's lifetimes,  
We beg him to tell us who we have been**

**In the world of light, and taste, and sunshine.  
Let the broken moments receive their true names.**

**Come to us,  
Singer of men's lives, make sense of us:  
Play back the music we wrote without knowing.  
Let us hear if it was lovely.**

**Repeat poem.**

Now, the only way that we are going to be able to catch those faint lost notes, so far afield are we in the thickets of our crowding thoughts, is first to stop, sit down and be quiet. The music is always there; the

heartsong is ever the signature of the Singer of Men's Lives, but we have to learn again to discern the sounds of silence.

The way we learn anything is by practice and discipline. That means work. There are no shortcuts. The theory is simple; the practice can be excruciating. Excruciatingly dull and endless and non-productive, or so it feels. But that's what knocks the corners off and reveals the shape of beauty. So we sit again and again to enter our silence, wondering what on earth we think we're doing. Certainly not achieving anything, we might truthfully say.

Isaac of Ninevah, 7<sup>th</sup> Century, begs to differ. He only managed 5 months as Bishop, which I expect was a pretty noisy pursuit, before resigning and retiring to the desert to live in solitude. He was clearly a whole-hog kind of person who threw his cap over the windmill right and proper, while we juggle exterior and interior and take our silence when we can. Nevertheless, his observations are instructive:

“Many are avidly seeking but they alone find who remain in continual silence. Every man who delights in a multitude of words, even though he says admirable things, is empty within. If you love truth be a lover of silence. Silence like the sunlight will illuminate you in God and deliver you from the phantom of ignorance. Silence will unite you with God himself. More than all things love silence, it brings you a fruit that tongue cannot describe. In the beginning we have to force ourselves to be silent and then there is born something which draws us to silence. May God give you an experience of this something which is born of silence. If only you will practise this, untold light will dawn on you as consequence. After a while a certain sweetness is born in the heart of this exercise and the body is drawn almost by force to remain in silence.”

Do you recognise that? Yes, and it is our work to clear that silent path to the heart. We use the mantra as the tool of our craft to chop away the undergrowth, but even as we labour with little to show, we are already somewhere. Here. Now. Something or Someone has brought us to this place of understanding so that we are able to desire that certain sweetness, which we cannot even imagine. The proof is in our presence. For here we are, in Scotland, seeking in silence the song of our hearts. It's a pretty unlikely activity, this meditating to the sound of an unsaid word and we should not overrate our own inclination and intention in getting as far as we have. We are led, whether we're aware or not and however mulish our response.

I suppose there are many factors...personality, character, inspiration, study, experience, seeming chance....that guide our hesitant steps. But it seems to me that for many of us, subtle signals aren't too effective. We respond best to being hit hard over the head and shaken

out of ourselves. Then, we are no longer distracted! If nothing else will do it, pain keeps us focussed. We'd not learn much without it.

Twenty years of working in a healing centre in unfashionable West Cumbria has convinced me that pain is a vital component of healing, of the body and of the soul. We try to banish it entirely from our lives with drugs or pleasure, at our peril. There is far more going on in the healing process than the alleviation of symptoms, for which relief nevertheless, much thanks. I have learned whatever I understand about contemplation from engaging in that process of healing pain. And I'll bet you have, too. Few come to meditation because their lives are so perfectly fulfilled that they feel no pain, experience no confusion, endure no agony. I would hazard a guess that there isn't a single pollyanna in this room. We choose the beckoning dark because we know with a desperate certainty that putting a jolly gloss on everything leads eventually and inevitably to despair. Pain cuts away the artifice and leaves us raw, but willing.

As far back in life as I can remember, I have been interested in prayer and silence, in knowing about it and in accepting the discipline it imposes. But it has been working in the Centre with all sorts of people suffering all sorts of conditions, and sharing their afflictions as far as one can enter into another's pain, that has allowed me to view meditation and silence from the back door of perception, the tradesmen's entrance of health care where people don't even try to pretend anymore that they are in control. Making an appointment for a hands-on healing session is often a last and desperate resort. I take great care to keep that first encounter practical and safe. We don't start with theory or theology because there would be no reception at all for such conversation. Who can care for another's abstract opinion in the midst of their own pain? We have to begin at the beginning, which is pretty basic and not very elevating.

Usually people who come to the Centre..... and when I speak of them, I speak also of you and me. Although entirely individual and particular, their lives and joys and sufferings are also universal and familiar and expressive of mankind in general. In that sense, there is nothing distinctive about any of us. We're all wired up more or less the same way, and when clients first appear, they are almost always in a downward spiral of alarming symptoms and can speak or think of little else. They are frightened, floundering and desperate to come home to themselves and find a firm footing in life again. They don't give a fig for me, or what I think, except insofar as I can mediate healing. Nor should they. They hurt and they want to stop hurting. And don't we all?

This initial self-concern is not because they lack greater perspective or interest in the meaning of life. Nor are they less empathetic or sensitive than we in this room are. It is because they are not well. To

illustrate. We often hear the quick measure of determining whether we are suffering from flu or just a bad cold. You know. There is a £10 note on your front step. Could you crawl out of bed to retrieve it? If yes, you have a cold. If no, you have flu. Well, I'd like you to cast your mind back now to some occasion when you had toothache. Real, ripping toothache and you had to wait until dawn to ring the dentist and until dusk before you could get in for treatment. Remember how you counted the minutes until you could take another pain killer? Remember how the pain blotted out the horizon and nothing, but nothing held any importance except the prospect of relief from the raging in your mouth? There are, of course, other more serious and searing conditions, but toothache is a pretty common experience and a good measure of how the body can interfere with the loftier pursuits of the mind. When we are in pain, the only word we can form is HELP.

And pain is a powerful leader, indeed. There is not much we can do with the rest of ourselves until we have found a way to ameliorate and manage it. Pain precludes rational thought and in extreme conditions blacks out everything while the brain and the body try to cope with our anguish. Pain can be physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, separately or all at once. Most of us will have at least tasted the lot. When it is bad, we sometimes vomit from pain; we weep, writhe and faint. Or we simply stand like a stunned ox, awaiting deliverance. Whatever else, we pay attention. Our minds do not wander.

That's the first step toward leadership: get their undivided attention. Pain is a pretty crude way of doing that, and there are others. Barack Obama did it in the American election by being reasoned, hopeful and calm. "Yes we can", he said, in the face of deep doubts that maybe we'd all forgotten how. People stopped to listen. He coupled that mantra of hope with what he calls "the philosophy of persistence". Who cannot wish him well? One thing is certain: he will have to lead by example rather than admonishment. Persistence is not a well-honed trait in our over-indulged culture; we are all too used to instant gratification. Listening these credit-crunched days to the ominous flapping of chickens coming home to roost, we have cause to remember that in life, as in our meditation practice, we get absolutely nowhere without persistence. We truly did mistake style for substance and rhetoric for reality. We were told we could have it all without unseemly effort. Now we have to dig out poor old persistence and give it another go.

There are other examples to instruct us. Gandhi claimed his right to lead by refusing to offer violence in return for violence. Turning the Other Cheek is a sure-fire way to stop the tit for tat and introduce silence. Nelson Mandela did it by enduring injustice without losing his own humanity. Mother Teresa did it by tending to the wretched of the earth even when, as we now know, her own faith had dimmed to invisibility. Jesus did it by perfect love. "I am the Way, the Truth and

the Light”, he said. “Follow me.” Leadership doesn’t come clearer than that.

But we, of course, do not customarily start from a place of moral authority that allows us to get ourselves into order, much less tell others how to do it. And the people just mentioned, our exemplars, didn’t begin there either. First they took on their pain and allowed it to transform them. I am sure none of us would queue up for hurt, but it happens and as our first guide into the heart, it works. Clears the air, by-passes our pride and opens us to the numinous. Refusing the toothache is not an option; we have to endure until we get to the dentist. But mistaking the euphoria after we’ve survived the treatment for reality, isn’t a viable option either. “I’ll never have to go there again!” we trill to ourselves. “I won! Look, Ma, I can bite again. No pain! It’s OVER!” Oh yeah. Until next time.

There will be a next time, and some more after that. Because whatever else we may be, we are repeaters. Habitual offenders. What goes around, comes around. Swings and roundabouts, merry and not-so-merry go rounds. So it is with pain and joy. Here they come again, muggins turn! But each time, deeper, truer. It’s a spiral, not a circle. So also with meditation and prayer, learning by patient repetition what we mean, where we’re going and how to get there. Life and death and then new life and before you can blink, death again. Oops! Been here before. That is the rhythm of our heartsong. A stanza of life and a chorus of death, before we get to the next verse.

That is how I learn about healing from my clients. Follow My Leader Pain, is the game we play. Every day. So I absorb their repetition as well as my own and that increases the impact. The only thing that holds us together is trust:... theirs in coming to the Centre with hope rather than expectation, mine in trusting that yet again touch will hold the power and do the work. And both of us holding onto the trust that if we can remain open and allow love to be, together we’ll find our way out of the confines of the mind into the freedom of the heart.

That isn’t the end of it. In fact, it is barely the beginning. It’s the arrow that points towards home. How we get there is another question. It is guaranteed to be an eventful trip. In healing, our aim isn’t to defeat disease or death or destiny. Behind every victory on those scores, lies the same old grinning skull. Rather, the intent is to heal and integrate our lives so that we can acknowledge the past, forgive it and release it. Neither clinging to what was, nor abandoning the memory but instead, changing and remembering and moving on. To a point of living grounded in reality, in the sacrament of the present. That’s what gives the mind and body the momentum to restore and mend. Similarly, in meditation we do not seek escape but direction, leading not into fantasy but realisation. Put simply,

meditation's message is, "Get real!" Stop making it up as you go along, and just go along.

Of course, not everyone embraces meditation as the discipline that can take them onward and inward. There are many forms of devotion and obedience and we each have to listen to the inner voice that tells us when to turn left and when to proceed straight ahead. Whichever road leads to truth is the right road. Among the many ways to many mansions, I would guess that contemplative practice is always a minority choice. But for those of us called to this vocation, it is thrilling to find the doors of prayerful silence opening in the midst of the pain of the world. Not in spite of or because of but fully integrated as part of. Then we see with new eyes that nothing is ever wasted and all that was and is and will be takes on a meant dimension and rescues suffering from futility.

This is the instant of epiphany, the flash of intuition that lights up a life forever. And oh, the relief to finally get a glimpse of what we're *for!* Now we can take a deep breath, push up our sleeves and dedicate ourselves for good. Present, accounted for and ready to roll! We see what we're meant to do and now must begin to learn how to do it.

And where does this revelation take us? Why, right back where we began, of course. To our minds, the point of departure for a journey into the heart. We can't leave them behind anymore than we can abandon our bodies in order to become all soul or our hearts to become all brain. We are incarnate beings, whole and indivisible. We travel that way or not at all. We all know what it is to be stuck and immovable in one or other aspects of our life, but we don't have to stay there. And we don't have to remain at the mercy of the chattering monkeys that infest our thoughts. Our first task in the new dispensation is to train the mind. We're not here to glorify ignorance. Meditation is not about blank eyes and blank minds. It's not nothing. It's not dumbing down; it's wiseing up.

Sometimes the journey from the mind to the heart makes a few necessary detours, bypasses to instinct and intuition where we can reacquaint ourselves with our true nature. There's not much point carrying along our false impressions of self. They get in the way of our understanding and sooner or later we have to ditch them.

There is an interesting discussion of this in a book called "Sunbathing in the Rain, A Cheerful book about Depression", by a Welsh poet, Gwyneth Lewis. She testifies to the utterly debilitating effects of depression that nails her to her bed and keeps her there until she learns its lessons. Before she finally found safe haven in meditation, she had to relinquish much of what she believed herself to be, and found she couldn't do it until she left her head and disappeared deeper into her body, to hear what it had to say to her.

She talks about this as moving from the head to the stomach. Listen to her recounting how she escaped depression's lifeless embrace:

"The way forward for me lay in using a different part of myself to judge between true and false. The best way I can describe it is moving down from head and into my stomach. The head is where all your fancies, recollections, gripes and projections are endlessly rehearsed. It's a Virtual Reality gallery dedicated to your personal preoccupations. Although the pictures are vivid—no compelling—this area has no way of distinguishing between fantasy and truth, because both look just as convincing. The head, then, is very good at trying out possibilities, versions of reality, and totally unable to make moral choices between them.

The stomach doesn't work visually but viscerally. It 'sees' in the dark, but if listened to carefully, gives reliable guidance. It ties itself in knots when you're lying, and tells you what to do even before you have worked out why that should be right. Like a dog it is instinctive in its likes and dislikes and its decisions are inevitably sound. The head tells you what could be, the stomach tells you what is.

When you're used to leading your life with your head, it's hard to move down and learn to see with another part of yourself. But the insights that come with the effort to do so are startling. ( Lewes, Sunbathing. p.235)

In my healing experience, this wrenching point of leaving the comfort of the mind telling soothing fibs to the body often leads to an immense tiredness. An exhaustion, in which the client may comment that he can barely move his arms or lift his head. Once up and off the couch, he will look a bit drunk and disoriented. We have no idea how tightly we've shackled ourselves until the key is turned loosing the cuffs. When this happens, I am always much cheered because I know then we are going to move and if we keep true, that movement will be in the right direction and the changes will be lasting. As you gather, even at this early stage, healing is a far cry from being simply a soporific relaxation technique or a shortcut to "feeling better about ourselves." It's more like a strong wind blowing than a warm breeze.

Once the breaking loose from the mind into the body has been accomplished in us, we need to re-examine the wisdom of our long tradition of Christian meditation. Teaching us clarity and purification and simplicity in thought and practice. If we skip that step in preparation, if we are lazy, we fall prey yet again to old temptations. We may veer toward the New Age and its promises of instant mysticism and superficial enlightenment at the click of a magic finger, (California has a lot to answer for!) or we might fall into obfuscation,

the newspeak jargon of bureaucracy and fudge. Or we can be dazzled by the calculations of research and statistics, which we soon learn to adapt to our current prejudices. It is not easy to be in the world but not of it.

We can do it, though, if we keep up the work of throwing out the excess baggage. It's a process of elimination, of fining down to the essential. To tune our hearing to the elusive strains of our heartsong, we have to let go, and keep letting go. We resist, because we are keepers, hoarders of our possibilities, filling the junk cupboards of our minds with broken thoughts that might come in handy someday. It's a waste of energy and an impediment to understanding.

Having got from her head to her stomach, Gwyneth Lewis continues, "For the first time I understood why conscious thought needs to be stopped in meditation. If the whole self is busy plotting, or remembering, the energy isn't being directed towards breaking down old complexes, fears and blocks. In meditation this energy first has a therapeutic effect and then leads to spiritual experience. My assumption had always been that it was somehow morally better not to focus on the chatter in your mind, but it had never before been explained to me that the energy thus used could be better employed in bypassing those processes altogether and living from a larger, less deluded place in the self.

She is right. We need to let go!

In fact, we practice stripping regularly, not necessarily for moral but for practical reasons, when we care about something enough to sacrifice whatever obscures the object of our desire. If it's stars we're after, we have to get away from the polluting light of the cities. If we want to hear the bird song, we must take the exit off the motorway and leave the traffic. We willingly give up what we don't need to attain what we desire, but there is always a price. Life outside the buzz of the city and the speed of the motorway can seem diminished and boring. We need to know that boring is a part of our prescription for recovery. Over-stimulation is a great part of our modern malady and responsible for our inability to concentrate properly.

Saul Bellow makes the case for it also being a symptom of sloth. Our old bete noir, laziness, bites again! He says, "Sloth is really a busy condition, hyperactive. This activity drives off the wonderful rest or balance without which there can be no poetry or art or thought—none of the highest human functions. These slothful sinners are not able to acquiesce in their own being, as some philosophers say. They labour because rest terrifies them. The old philosophy distinguished between knowledge achieved by effort (ratio) and knowledge received (intellectus) by the listening soul that can hear the essence of things and comes to understand the marvellous. But this calls for unusual

strength of soul. The more so since society claims more and more of your inner self and infects you with its restlessness. It trains you in distraction, colonises consciousness as fast as consciousness advances. The true poise, that of contemplation or imagination, sits right on the border of sleep and dreaming.

(Saul Bellow, Humbolt's Gift, Penguin, New York, 1975. P 306.)

That struck me with some force. We worry about falling asleep during meditation and feel apologetic when we do, but seen in this light, it is just a straying over the border, to be expected and embraced as we begin to learn to sit lightly on the very margin of reality.

So then, let us press on and bear with the boring bits. They are a universal experience on the path to the heart. Andrew Harvey who combined physical and metaphysical travel on his Journey to Ladakh, muses:

Some meditation should be boring, should be as boring as possible, because in intense boredom all our habitual responses and concepts are dissolved. The mind's terror of boredom is the more acute because the mind suspects that through boredom, through its extreme experience, another reality might be reached that would threaten its pretensions, and perhaps even dissolve them altogether.

(Andrew Harvey, A Journey in Ladakh, Picador, 1993. P. 184) Aha. We begin to understand that boredom in meditation is not just a price we must pay, but a vital stage in the passage from mind to heart.

When we've taken that in and our fear of boredom becomes less than our fear of returning to the old unsatisfactory ways of living only in our head and our sensations, we confront the final and highest hurdle of all. The Ego. Our constant companion, forever whispering in our ears: How about me?"

There is much to be said and much that has been said about conquering the ego, but I don't think we can. I think egos are like rats. Resourceful, resilient and never more than a few feet away. They cannot and should not be eliminated. They are as much a part of creation as any other creature or aspect of ourselves. But they need to be controlled and their cunning curtailed to avoid serious harm. The consensus of the wisdom of the ages seems to be that only love can do this, can take us out of our false selves and beyond our introspection to our own authentic being.

Which brings us to the heart, and its song of love. However often we banish ourselves from our true home, by thought, word and deed, we can always follow the melody back. We can love our way to truth. The Lost Music can be found again, and again and again. And again.

**There is a place where it is all recorded,**

**Each look, each touch and kiss, each word, discarded  
As casually as rain into the sea,  
Is treasured there, and waits to be recovered.**

**The keeper of this place is known to you  
From long ago. And yet he has no past**

**And makes no plan, and feels no weight of loss,  
No fear, only moment by moment loses  
A stream of random and beautiful  
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**Now, in the dark place, each of us forgotten,  
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**Like the architects of buildings we shall not see,  
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**In the world of light, and taste, and sunshine.  
Let the broken moments receive their true names.**

**Come to us,  
Singer of men's lives, make sense of us:  
Play back the music we wrote without knowing.  
Let us hear if it was lovely.**

As we enter our last meditation today, let's take with us as a blessing, an epitaph from a North Yorkshire country churchyard. It reads, "Courage for the great sorrows of life, and patience for the small ones; and then when you have accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake." (From Outlook, no.62 2009 p.11)