

Turning to the Mystics



St. John of the Cross: Session 2

with James Finley

Jim Finley: Greetings, I'm Jim Finley. Welcome to Turning to the Mystics. Greetings everyone. Welcome to our time here together, turning for guidance to the Christian mystic Saint John of the Cross. In his teachings we enter into perfect union with God in a passage through a dark night. We're trying to understand what this dark night is of which he speaks so that we may benefit from it and often find guidance in it our ongoing search to deepen our experience of and response to God's presence in our life.

Jim Finley: In the previous session, in *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book Two*, Chapter 13, we saw how we can begin to discern and respond to the emergence of the dark night in prayer and meditation. And we saw to that in that experience as a dark night in prayer, that there's a passive aspect and an active aspect. The passive aspect is it happens to us as the loss of gratification of the sense of God's presence in our life in prayer. There we're not gratified and thinking of the things of God. There's the loss of the felt sense of God's presence and so on. And the act of night is we actively cooperate with that as we hand ourselves over in our powerlessness to experience God, we hand ourselves over to God. Jesus, on the cross, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Jim Finley: And in that act of cooperation, of surrendered openness to God, in our helplessness, there begins to emerge in us this general loving awareness, this sense of resting and God resting in us, beyond words, beyond thoughts and so on, beyond emotion, the gate of heaven, a foretaste of eternal life in so far as possible in this life, through this love.

Jim Finley: So now I want to turn in *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book One*, John of the Cross then takes this initial sense, this taste of a loss of the gratification of the things of God and our customary ways of experiencing that through our emotions, through our insights, our aspirations and all that, through the loss of being gratified in that, to see how the loss arises from God weaning us off our dependency on these finite ways of experiencing the infinite love of God. So that in that loss of those finite ways, we might begin to experience an infinite union with the infinite love of God in the depths of our powerlessness.

Jim Finley: And so in *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book One*, he then takes that stance, This willingness to be surrendered over in this powerlessness, of how it can be actively chosen as an attitude that we can carry through the whole day towards sensory experience. Of course, what comes to us through the senses. And more particularly what he refers to as the appetites. The appetites are the five senses fueled by the desire for gratification. And so St. John of the Cross says in *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book One*, Chapter Three, he says "*the eye feeds upon its objects by means of light in such a way that when the light is extinguished, the eye no longer sees them. Similarly does a man by means of his appetite feed and pasture on worldly things that gratify his faculties. When the appetites are extinguished or mortified, he no longer feeds upon the pleasure of these things, but lives as in a void and in darkness with respect to his appetites.*" It's article one and article two, next paragraph.

Jim Finley: *Let us draw some examples from each of the faculties. An individual, by depriving himself of his appetite for the delight of hearing, lives in darkness and emptiness in this sense faculty and depriving himself of the pleasures of seeing things, he lives in darkness and poverty in the faculty of sight. And denying himself for the fragrance pleasing to the sense of smell. He abides in emptiness and darkness with the sense faculties.*

Jim Finley: So what's this about? These are hard sayings. When I first started reading John of the Cross in the monastery, I had this images, is he saying, "Go ahead, go to one of the finest restaurants in town. Get a window table with a lovely view, take in the ambience, get some more appetizers. Order the finest wine you can to pleasure your palate. Get the most elegant meal. Sit there and all that. Just don't enjoy it." He's clearly not saying that.

Jim Finley: So then what is he saying? See, how do we find our way through to what he's saying, which is actually understanding the ways of love I think? An insight into the subtleties or depth of love of a consummating unconsummated longings. And I want to get at this. See, how can we get at this, not just at this level that John of the Cross is talking about, of this point of being carried over into more contemplative, mystical modes of experiencing God's presence in so far as possible on this earth through love? But to see how that the energies, those transformative energies rain down into and are actually present in all the layers and dimensions of love in our life wherever it is found, the ways of love.

Jim Finley: And this is where I'd like to start. So we can get a sense of what he's talking about, about deprivation and so on. Because it's subtle actually. But when we reflect on it, we can get to see what he's, he's trying to put words to something that's hard to talk about. So I'd like to give an example from this.

Jim Finley: For those of us who are so fortunate to fall deeply in love with someone who's fallen deeply in love with us, and we commit ourselves to that, which is the essence of say of marital love. This is what these mystics do. They see that as the primary metaphor of mystical union with God, sometimes why they're referred to as nuptial mystics. We saw this in Theresa, also on this idea of moving toward mystical marriage, being married to God. If we look at this whole experience of the beloved, I think we could say this. Let's say it starts out by what we see with our eyes of the beauty of the beloved, the physical appearance of the beloved, the charm of the beloved, the presence of the beloved. And that beauty of the beloved that we see with our eyes, and we're drawn towards it, gratifies us. There's something gratifying about that.

Jim Finley: But as we lean in closer in the love that arises in leaning in closer, we begin to see a beauty within the beloved is deeper than what the eyes can see. We start seeing something of the soulful presence of the beloved, and we realize that our heart is falling in love with that, beginning with the senses but transcending the senses.

Jim Finley: Likewise, we can begin by being drawn by the gratification of hearing the person's voice, just the very sound of their voice, the things that they say, the way they say what they say in their voice and the voice is alluring to us. And we're drawn to the charm of that hearing and the gratification. But as we lean in closer to it, the love that awakens within us, hears within the the depth of the beloved's voice that the ears can hear the voice of the beloved saying to us that they love us, or saying to us, their voice asking us to come in closer. That kind of hearing where we can hear the inscape, the inner intonations of the beloved's soul that this speaks out to the things that they hear of the transcend what the ears can hear.

Jim Finley: So too, with touch, to touch the beloved, the body of the beloved and the pleasure that comes through touching the beloved. But in moving in closer, the love that deepens in the touching the body of the beloved. We see that their body embodies the soul essence and what we find so unexplainably beautiful. So unexplainably deep about the mystery of who

they are. So unexplainably, we see them to be in our love for them. And when they then return the favor, the reciprocity of that in us, it's a great gift.

Jim Finley: But we also see that it's not a free ride. It's not a free ride at all. Why? Because one needs to nurture that and watch over it and protect it, because it can become lost in countless different ways. And this is what John of the Cross I think is trying to help us to get at actually, because I feel too that if we can understand this in our love for each other, this dynamic of love, the metaphor of the night, then we can see what it means for the person who realized they're falling in love with God, who from all eternity is infinitely in love with you as the beloved. And he's trying to understand the artistry of being transformed in the process of being given over to it, fulfilled in that love, and moving past that which hinders us from being so transformed.

Jim Finley: There's a country singer, Johnny Cash. I'll paraphrase it as I remember it in my mind. *I fell into a burning ring of fire, down, down, down the flames went higher, this ring of fire. And he says with you, I find it very, very easy to be true. Because of you I walk the line. I keep a close watch on this heart of mine.* What's that mean? What's that mean? See, it means that the lovers says to the beloved, yes, because of you, the burning ring of fire. So that doesn't mean for the one so taken and surrendered over to the fire of this love, it doesn't mean at all that he does not or she does not, each person doesn't out in the day by day world, see people that they recognize, they find very attractive physically. They just find their physical appearance is very attractive to them. And there's that initial gratification that comes, being pleased and being present to someone that we see to be attractive.

Jim Finley: But here's the thing. In seeing that attraction and that initial gratification, they don't act on it. They don't. For the minority do they not act on it physically, they don't indulge themselves in a kind of fantasized lingering in that. Why? Because that gratification pales in significance to the depths of the gratification that comes to them and washes over them and they're surrendering over in the one that's with the beloved, that's why. Compared to that depth of what they see in the attractive person with their eyes, that gratification is nothing to them compared to the deep soulful gratification that they see interiorly beyond seeing in the soul. And therefore they keep a close watch on that heart of mind. We just don't go there.

Jim Finley: And in that sense then, you keep yourself in darkness like, in a deprivation of that gratification. You don't linger there, stay there, live there, lest one would risk watering down or losing the depth of the oneness. So too, with hearing and hearing the beloved's voice. it doesn't mean that one doesn't hear in the voice of another person the beauty of their voice or the beauty of the things they say or how they say them. The charm of it, doesn't mean that one doesn't recognize that. And it doesn't mean that doesn't bring its own gratification, but one doesn't go there. When one lives in extinction of that desire, of meaning one does not indulge oneself in it. For whatever that gratification is, it pales in significance to the voice that one here is in the depth of the love of a hearing beyond what the ears can hear in the intimations of the beloved's voice, and so on, and so on.

Jim Finley: And so this extinction that he's talking about here, John of the Cross, that's what he's

talking about. There's a musical, how you're going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris? See, how are we going to settle for the passing gratifications of sensory pleasures through touch and seeing and hearing and so on. Once we've touched this deep gratification, interior inner-most gratification, giving it in love, And so we need to be protective and watch over it, which is the art of fidelity.

Jim Finley: No, John of the Cross then I think takes the same dynamic, because it's a continuum, how it applies then to God. And to say that, yes, it's true that in our meditation, we are gratified in meditation, in our life because there there are consolations come to us, an inner warmth of the felt sense of the presence of God. And then also we can see then God's presence shining out through the beauty of the things that we see. The sunset, a single flower, a sleeping child. We get intimations of the presence of God in the things that we see and those things that we touch and the things that we hear, all of that, all of that. These finite ways of experiencing the infinite presence of God incarnate in our bodies, in our life and our relationships, all of that efficacious under holiness.

Jim Finley: But when we die and pass through the veil of death, we pass into an infinite union with the infinite love of God, beyond seeing, beyond hearing, beyond what we can touch. And John of the Cross says then the deprivation comes and having beginning to get a taste of that heavenly fulfillment of oneness, having tasted obscurely and having tasted it, one then holds an abeyance, the gratification of sensing God's presence to and the pleasures that are offered to us through the senses. Because compared to this, the slowly emerging depth of oneness, we don't stay there. We don't stop there as our base of operations. We acknowledge the gratification that's present, but then we see past it, seeing that the gratification doesn't gratify the deepest longings that are stirring within us in this oneness.

Jim Finley: And so I think this is really the thing, because he says here, he said, the issue here, he says, is that the cause of this darkness that is the reason one chooses to deprive oneself in this artistry now falling in love with God, falling in love with you, beyond thoughts and words and images and so on in the depths of your heart. *The cause of this darkness is attributable to the fact that the soul is like a tabula rasa, a blank slate. So when God infuses it into the body so that it would be ignorant without the knowledge it receives to the senses.* So here's the inside of John of the Cross. Because everything that the eyes can see is finite, and because the act of seeing what the eyes see, that act of seeing is finite and because the gratification that comes through seeing what the eyes see is finite, it means that that gratification compared to the infinite gratification of immersion, the infinite love of God is nothing to us. We see the nothingness of it.

Jim Finley: Likewise, same thing with hearing, same with touch. And so then he says, this is chapter five. So he tries to bring this home to us. And in article three, chapter five, he says, *it ought to be kept in mind that an attachment to a creature makes a person equal to that creature.* That is love evokes likeness. We become like what we love. And so he starts this litany. All the creatures of heaven and earth are nothing when compared to God. I looked on the earth and it was empty and nothing. And at the heavens, and I saw that they had no light, Jeremiah chapter 4:23 23. By saying that he saw the earth is empty, he meant that all of its creatures were nothing and that the earth was

nothing compared to the infinite presence of God. This present thing itself for, in, and as the presence of the earth, that it is as nothing because it's all passing away.

Jim Finley: So what is it that never passes away in the midst of all that passes away? It is this infinite presence that is now being revealed to the soul. In that infinite presence then you can see the nothingness, the gratification of what passes away compared to the love that never passes away. All the beauty of creatures compared to the infinite beauty of God is supreme ugliness as The Solomon says. A soul so unsightly and so on. All the goodness of creatures of the world compared with the infinite goodness of God can be called evil, evil in so far as it distracts us and seduces us away from this infinite beauty that alone fulfills the deepest longings of our heart. All the world's wisdom and human ability, contrasted with the infinite wisdom of God, is pure and utter ignorance as Saint Paul writes, the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight, I Corinthians chapter three, verse 19. Therefore, anyone who values his knowledge and ability as a means of reaching union with the wisdom of God is highly ignorant in God's sight. It will be left behind far away from this wisdom.

Jim Finley: I love this sentence here. Ignorance does not grasp what wisdom is and in God's sight, those who think they have some wisdom are very ignorant. Only those who set aside their own knowledge and walk in God's service like unlearned children receive wisdom from God. So this is the tone of it then. and this is something very, very subtle really, I'd say, that in your daily life and in your prayers, something's happening.

Jim Finley: Again we've heard earlier that Thomas Merton would say he thinks there are people who are being drawn to this, but they have no one to bear witness to what's happening to them. It's so subtle. And in some subtle way you cannot explain. You're beginning to fall in love with God. You're beginning to realize that God desires you to desire God and to pass out beyond the frontiers of all that you can grasp, all that you can feel, all that you can see or touch here and cross over in your heart, or let God carry you over into this depth of infinite love that is your ultimate destiny. Not in the fullness that will be ours in glory throughout all of eternity, but in some subtle, obscure manner that is possible on this earth through love.

Jim Finley: Next is that it's consoling to see that here of what happens in this attitudinal stance, like when we live this way. So we use the example of a dinner again at the restaurant. And it says just one of these beautiful meals with somebody. It just like this beautiful that you recognize in your heart that the beauty of the taste of the food, the wine, all of it, you appreciate all of that. And you feel the gratification, but you're also aware that that gratification is impoverished compared to the gratification that's so unexplainably beginning to well up from the depths of your heart, as this infinite love taking you to itself. It's very subtle like this.

Jim Finley: And then to see where this takes us. This helps us to see where the direction, if we keep following this path where we take us through his teaching. And this is in The Spiritual Canticle, the passage of the Canticle and we'll be looking at this in a later episode. This is stanza 14 and 15. *My beloved is the mountains and lonely wooded valleys and strange islands and resounding rivers.* Comments, this is stanza 14 and 15, the commentary. *My beloved is the mountains. Mountains have heights, and they are affluent, vast, beautiful, graceful, bright, and fragrant. These mountains are what my beloved is to me. And lonely wooded valleys. Lonely wooded valleys are quiet, pleasant, cool, shady, and flowing with fresh waters, in the variety of*

their groves and in the sweet song of the birds, they afford abundant recreation and delight to the senses. And there's solitude and silence. They refresh and give rest. These valleys are what my beloved is to me. Strange islands are surrounded by water and situated across the sea, far withdrawn and cut off from communication with other people.

Jim Finley: So I want to talk about this, my beloved is the mountains. Here's what John of the Cross says. Let's say we're living this way. We're living in the flow of the subtlety of this transformation that he speaks of in the senses passing, beyond the senses, in the midst of the senses and so on. He says in the beginning, say take the mountains, that the beauty of the mountains is seductive because of possessiveness of heart. That is we want to stop short at the gratification that's offered in the eyes seeing that beauty. But as we linger in this attitude that he's inviting us to cultivate here, this interior attitudinal stance of intentiveness infused with love, he says, you begin to realize the beloved has passed this way in haste, as you see traces of the infinite love of God in the mountains.

Jim Finley: And when it gets deeper, he says, *my beloved is the mountains*. So it is as if it's coming to the realization, this intimate realization that the world is God's body, and his body in forth the love that uttering it into being. That the body of the beloved is God's body. And that the body of the beloved embodies the love that's uttering it into being. That your body is the body of the beloved and that your body embodies the love that's uttering it into being.

Jim Finley: And so then by refraining from partial and finite gratifications, one drops down into this infinite gratification that's fully incarnate in the intimacy and beauty of our body, the spirituality of sensuality transformed through this love. And I think this is John of the Cross's, this is the path he's trying to get. And I also think here, this is very subtle when we try to get at this as a topic, but to know that in real life, this is meant to be contemplative to spiritual direction. It's meant to listen very closely to what's happening inside of your heart. And he's offering guidance in it, like the subtlety of guidance in this transformative fidelity, something so subtle and deep and intimate to us.

Jim Finley: Another phase of this active night through the senses is that, I think in Chapter 11, Article One, too, St. John of the Cross, makes some distinctions or clarifications that can help us to discern this admittedly very subtle point that he's making here. He says in Article One, *the reader has apparently desired for quite a while to ask if the total mortification of all the appetites large and small is a requirement for the attainment of this high state of perfection, where if it is sufficient to mortify just some of them and leave the others, at least those that seem to be trifling, for it seems to be an extremely arduous task for a person to attain such purity and nakedness that he has no affection for anything.*

Jim Finley: Article two. *First of all, in answer to this query, it is true that not all the appetites are equally detrimental, nor are all equally a hindrance to the soul. I'm speaking of the voluntary appetites, because the natural ones are little or no hindrance at all to the attainment of the union, provided they do not receive one's consent or pass beyond the first movement in which the rational will plays no role. For to eradicate the natural appetite, that is to mortify them entirely is impossible in this life.*

Jim Finley: I'd like to reflect on this to clarify what he's saying here. Is the hindrance to divine union, this mystical union with God, a foretaste of paradise, that in the pursuit of this union, the

world that we see with our senses is not a hindrance to that union, because God creates the world and the beauty of the world, the surrounding world in all of its forms. God's presently creating it right now at this present moment. And therefore that we see in the world the generosity of God or the love of God or the presence of God in the presence of the surrounding world.

Jim Finley: Secondly, the hindrance that John of the Cross is concerned about here, not only is it not the world. The problem is also not the senses, for God creates the senses that allows us to see and touch and respond to the surrounding world. That's not a hindrance, for God creates that. It's just basically the holiness of the human experience. He's not talking about that.

Jim Finley: Next, he's not talking about the natural appetites that the gratification that comes in being gratified by seeing and smelling and tasting and touching and listening to the [inaudible 00:31:18], for God creates that gratification. The gratification that comes through the senses in the surrounding world that we can see and touch with our hands and hear, God creates that gratification as inherent into the the gift of being human. Rather, John of the Cross is saying the issue here is the voluntary appetites. And the voluntary appetite with respect to John of the Cross is this. It's like an inner sensitivity. You don't have to say this consciously, but it's an habitual sensitivity that yes, here I am in this beautiful moment, in the midst of the mountains or this lovely dinner with this person, or listening to the beauty of the music. Yes, it's true. It's so amazing. It's so beautiful. It is. Yes, it is. And I'm grateful for it.

Jim Finley: But I know in my heart that this gratification is infinitely less than the gratification that I'm just beginning to experience in a wordless, sweet interior communion with God beyond thought, beyond feeling, beyond emotion. It's a foretaste of heaven. Because that taste, that gratification is an infinite gratification. And this gratification is a gratification that's finite. And therefore, because it's finite, it's infinitely less than what I'm looking for. And therefore I experience it. I experience the gratification, but I'm just very sensitive to the fact that I'd not stay in the moment at that level, intentionally, that I not stop there to seize hold of it or have it. But rather I let the spirituality of sensuality, I let it all flow through me, reminding me of an opening out upon this very deep gratification of infinite union with infinite love.

Jim Finley: And that's what he's talking about. And he's also saying that also doesn't mean... Also venial sins, quote, quote, imperfections in this do not hinder us. We'll be talking about that in just a moment. Because we're poor, weak creatures. We're talking about realizing on purpose that there's a habit. This is understanding the heart of addiction in a way, that there are certain habits that compromise the fullness of the love that we're called to. And even though we realize it, we postpone addressing it. The price paid for the half of life is bitter. And so it's that intentional insensitivity that he's after here. And then awareness of the insensitivity. That's then where we turn in realizing that, because we're poor, weak creatures infinitely loved by God, so we ask for God's help, that we learned with God's help to look past and beyond that and to work at letting go of and passing beyond the realms of the finite to pass beyond the frontiers of the horizon of the finite into this infinite love, this transforming us and calling us into itself so unexplainably in the depths of our heart. So that's the point.

Jim Finley: And then we can see how that same point comes up in the subtlety of the deepening intimacy of marital love. It also comes up in parenting. It comes up to the artist, the poet, and so on, the same subtle tipping point of being called to a depth of something

there requires one not to be postponed by distracting moments of gratification that are so infinitely less, what you're searching or being drawn into. And this is the artistry that St. John of the Cross is calling us to, if that helps.

Jim Finley: There's another dimension in Chapter 11 of *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, Book One. And this has to do with being what happens when they're in the presence of the beloved. I don't want to apply this again, to the intimacy say of married love, this kind of intimate dialogue with the beloved. So that even in the relationship with the beloved, there arises awarenesses of attitudes that hinder going ever deeper into the oneness with each other, that open out into the depths of God. And so too, with God, there are certain habits. And so he suggests some. He said, well, what are these habits that hinder us from the consummation that we long for? Some examples, this is Article Four, Chapter 11, Book One of *the Ascent of Mt. Carmel*.

Jim Finley: *Some examples of these habitual imperfections are the common habit of loquacity, like talking too much, a small attachment one never really desires to conquer, for example, to a person, to clothing, to a book or a cell, to the way food is prepared and to other trifling conversations. A little satisfactions and tasting, knowing, hearing things, any of these habitual imperfections and attachments to them causes as much harm as an individual would in the daily commission of many other imperfections. It makes a little difference whether a bird is tied by a thin thread or by a cord. For even if tied by a thread, the bird will be prevented from taking off just as surely if it were tied by a cord, if it will be impeded from flight as long as it does not break that thread.*

Jim Finley: Article Five: *It is a matter for deep sorrow that while God has bestowed on them the power to break stronger cords of attachment to sins and vanities, they fail to attain so much good, because they do not become detached from some selfish, from some childish thing, which God has requested them to conquer out of love for him and which amounts to no more than a thread or a hair. What is worse, not only do they fail to advance, but they turn back because of their small attachment, losing what they have gained in their journey at the expense of so much time and effort.*

Jim Finley: I'd like to reflect on this. Say we're a people, a community in a dialogue with the moment of union with the beloved. In a moment of union with the beloved, you realize the tendency of talking to almost avoid or to protect oneself from falling deeper into love, where you can sense that the beloved is doing it. The wall of words, when it's talking to avoid the vulnerability of the silence, of a deeper surrender or loss of control in the love. Or put it in another way. I notice that there may be certain habits, certain habits. And for example, there might be habits of resentment, habits of impatience, habits of withholding intimacy, habits of halfheartedness, habits of procrastination, which one clearly knows the beloved finds a hindrance to the union and you find a hindrance to it also.

Jim Finley: It isn't that those habits are there, because you're just a human being. It's the subtle extent what you passively go along in not committing yourself through love with God's grace and a vulnerability with the beloved, that by acknowledging those habits and the humble acknowledgement of the habits, you can pass through that humanity into the love of being loving each other and the preciousness of yourself in your half-hearted broken ways.

Jim Finley: That's the sad part. The sad part is the delayed gratification that comes in the vulnerability of an openness that isn't dependent on the ability to actually get past all that. You may not with some of these things, but to get past the subtle ways of the indifference of allowing yourself

to be unexplainably loved in the midst of those very unresolved matters of your heart, as an echo of how God loves us as infinitely precious and the unresolved matter of our wayward ways.

Jim Finley: And I like to share it an image of this. Me as a way to end. See when the ego listens to this, when we listen to this as attainment, we set on the goal to become detached from sensory gratification. We promote it, what is finite? And we work on that, striving toward that goal is to become that way. That's how it goes. So I want to share in the light of that experience that I had.

Jim Finley: Some years ago, actually I was on a flight to give a retreat on St. John of the Cross. And I was sitting there on the plane and I was actually working on this chapter. It was a silent, a contemplative retreat on St. John of the Cross. I was writing out my notes. This was 20 some years ago.

Jim Finley: And I was up toward the front of coach, the front of the plane, one of the first rows. And the stewardess came down the aisle with coffee. And I asked for coffee, cream and sugar. So when the person put down my coffee, as I had an aisle seat, and I was working on my notes on detachment from sensory gratification. And I noticed that the attendant did not put down the cream and sugar, which I always have with my coffee. So I looked over my shoulder to try to get her attention, and she couldn't hear me. So I kept writing all my notes on detachment from sensory gratification.

Jim Finley: And so I reached up and I pushed the little light, made a ding sound, so hoping the person would come right back. "What is it? And here's your cream and sugar." I push it. And I kept working on detachment on sensory gratification. And the person didn't come back. So I looked over my shoulder going, why is it so hard to get some decent service here? And what's going... So I have to make a statement, I pushed the button twice, ding, ding, to make a little statement to assert my frustration. Then I went back to my detachment on sensory gratification. And then I realized what I was doing. I was so embarrassed. What I was really caught myself is I was attached to my image of myself as someone who was detached from sensory gratification. And that's the root of the conversion in love that we're looking for. It's not the attainment of something, but rather the love that attains us and our inability to attain it by taking us to itself in all the unresolved matters of our heart. so unexplainably deeper, deeper, deeper, ever deeper.

Jim Finley: So we'll end here with this. And you can see here that the, I guess with all these mystics really, it's not challenging because it's academic. It's challenging because we're not used to someone inviting us to be so attentive to such delicate levels of the interiority of our mind and heart, surrendered over into the presence of God. Whether we're being called to the dark night, this deprivation of finite consolation, so that in the deprivation we might taste the infinite consolation of God in so far as possible to, whether that pertains to us as it's happening to us, or it might not be happening to us just yet.

Jim Finley: But to know that the transformative artistry of this love, like the dao at [inaudible 00:44:34], like it rings down into the lowest places giving life to everything, that this same transformative energy is present in all the modalities of our life, in marital love. But I think it's also present, We don't have the time to expand on this here, but we mentioned this

earlier, too. Any transformative process where you've been accessed by a love for some deep, deep thing that asks everything of you, the way of the artist, the way of the poet, the way of the musician, the way of the teacher, the way of the healer, the way of the solitary, that there's something like an expansive depth that's opened up to you. You lean into it and it's calling you to itself. But you can follow it, not without a price, because you have to be willing to forgo and not get caught up in the pleasures and pastimes and diversions that would water down the fidelity to the transformations that you're being called to.

Jim Finley: And so this is really I think the refinement of experiential self knowledge and love that St. John of the Cross and all the mystics are inviting us to. So in that, it was sensitivity then to these matters like this would and then with the meditation. So ground yourself in these matters of the heart open to God in meditation, by inviting, by sitting straight and fold your hands and bow repeat after me.

Jim Finley: Be still and know I am God.

Jim Finley: Be still and know I am.

Jim Finley: Be still and know.

Jim Finley: Be still.

Jim Finley: Be.

Jim Finley: (silence)

Jim Finley: Shall we say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

Jim Finley: Mary Mother, contemplatives, pray for us. St. Theresa of Avila, pray for us. St. John of the Cross, pray for us.

Jim Finley: Till next time, blessings.

Kirsten Oates: Thank you for listening to this episode of Turning to the Mystics, a podcast created by the Center for Action and Contemplation. We're planning to do episodes that answer your questions, So if you have a question, please email us at podcast@cac.org or send us a voicemail at cac.org/voicemails. All of this information can be found in the show notes. We'll see you again soon.