

Turning
to the
Mystics



Mechtild of Magdeburg

Mechtild of Magdeburg: Session 2
with James Finley

Jim Finley: Greetings. I'm Jim Finley. Welcome to Turning to the Mystics.

Greetings everyone, and welcome to our time together, turning for guidance to the Christian Mystic Mechtild Magdeburg.

In this session, I'll be reflecting on her book, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, Book Three, the second section. And as in the previous session, as I stop at each little aspect of this, as she goes through it, I'll share with you what I see in it, like what it evokes in me and my familiarity with these traditions and what it speaks to me, says to me, so you can then, in a prayerful way if you're so inclined, just sit with it and see what it evokes in you. And this way we'll be joining her in Jesus, in their love language with each other. And this is turning to Mechtild, having her guide us in this love language.

So she begins. "Oh sweet Jesus, most handsome image, unconcealed to my exiled soul in distress and in love. In love, I praise you through yourself, in distress and in love, in union with all creatures. I yearn to do this above all things."

And so she is saying to Jesus, having us listen in as she says to Jesus, see that Jesus is the most handsome of the most beautiful or noble, the image of the invisible God. See unconcealed to my exiled soul. That we're in an exiled state. That is God is all about us and within us, closer to us than we are to ourselves. This infinite reality pouring itself out and giving itself to us as our very reality in our nothingness without God, the reality of everyone and everything.

But we don't see God with our eyes. We can't touch God with our hands. We can't grasp God with our mind. So, we're in an exiled state. But in the exiled state, through the gift of faith, we're interiorly illumined in the light of faith, to see God being revealed to us in our exiled state. So unconcealed, that is unrevealed and laid bare, in my exiled state, I interiorly see you seeing me. I interiorly sense your unexplainable oneness with me and your love for me, my exiled soul.

And I sense this in my distress. That is when I am distressed, I sense that I'm not alone in my distress, that you're with me in my distress and you're just sustaining me in my distress. And even when my distress becomes intensified to the point of trauma, where I can no longer sense your presence, I know in faith that you are with me, sustaining me in ways that I cannot feel and I do not understand.

And you are with me in love, in moments where I enjoy or savor loving and being loved, because I see your infinite love shining through the love of the moment, transcending the love of the moment, and knowing too, that this love that I feel for this person, or this person's love for me, or for the earth, or for animals, whatever, I know that this love is your love being incarnate and poured out in, and as, being loved and loving this person, the world and all things. And so in my exiled soul, you're unconcealed in my distress and you're unconcealed in my love.

In love, I praise you through yourself, in distress and in love and in union with all creatures. I yearned to do this above all things. You can see how intuitively dense her metaphorical imagery is. So, just walk through the phrasing to what I see in it.

See, it's in love, I praise you. So, it's when I'm in this stance of interior love, that in this

love, I praise you through yourself. For you are the love through whom and by whom, I am being loved. And you are the love that is the love in which I'm praising you. So, it's an all-encompassing, atmospheric love. And not just that, not just through me in union but with all creatures, that I see that your love is permeates all creatures. The darkness of the night. The stars moving overhead in the dark. The sound of our own breathing. The smell of flowers. The mountains. The waves crashing on the beach. I see that this is your loving presence being poured out, in and as the darkness, and as the light, in and as the animals and the birds and so on. And this God-given godly nature, this God-given divinity of all things and this shared nothingness without you, Lord, this love, this love nature of all things.

And I yearn to do this above all things. That as I yearn to see this above all things. And I yearn to surrender to this above all things, is to grow in this my evermore habitual awareness of the flow of your infinite love that alone is ultimately real, as life of my life, breath of my breath. Like this, I yearn for this.

And so you see the gift of longing and I think for us, may be very clear that that longing isn't given to us, but there is a sincerity of our longing to long more deeply. It is true. My longing comes and goes. My longing comes and goes. But in me as a sincerity of my longing to become ever more faithful and surrendered over to this longing, that echoes God's infinite longing for me.

Then she goes on. "Lord, you are the son for all eyes. You're the light of all ears. You are the voice of all words. You are the forest behind all piety. You're the teaching of all wisdom. You are the life of all that lives. You are the ordering of all that is." When I walk through this kind, rephrasing or echoing this unit of nature of God's all pervasive love.

Lord, you are the sun for all eyes. Lord, I think poetically she's saying that when I see the light shining out from the sun, I see the light shining out from you, incarnate in and as the light of the sun and it's nothingness without you. But the light of the sun is you. Because without you creating the sun, moment by moment, by moment, there's no sun. It's given by you and incarnate you. You are the delight of all ears. For all the sounds that delight us, a song of birds, the beloved's voice, all the sounds that cause delight, you are that delight. You are the delight of the sounds that delight is you. It's you.

You are the voice of all words. All these words, you're the voice of those words. Particularly, you are the voice of those words in your words to us in Jesus and the scriptures. It's your voice in the words. But also it's your voice in our words, when we speak words of love, when we speak words of sincerity, when we see someone in distress and stop and ask, "Are you okay?" You are the voice that's incarnate in my words to that person, asking if they're okay. It is this.

And of course for us too. We waiver in this fidelity, for we say words that are not untrue to love. And so God is still loving us in these waywardness of our words that we use with less than loving, less than truthful ways, until we can resume, realize what we're doing, and get back into this, words of repentance and words of trying harder and words of being reinstated again, in the truth of these words. These are the words of poets. These are the words of lovers. These are the cry of the poor. This is the healing word is God's voice. It is the voice of all these words.

You are the force behind all piety. That is my devotional sincerity. It is the momentum of your love for me, that is manifesting and felt in my devotional piety, sincerity in my searching for you, circling back upon itself and giving it back to you, giving yourself to me in the sincerity or the piety of my heart.

The piety that she was writing these reflections, the piety in which I'm sharing it with you, that God is this piety and God is the piety of your sincerity, of hearing these words of love. God is the gift that's given to you, in so far as you're touched by the beauty of these love words. And you are the life of all that lives.

And so when Jesus says, "I came to you might have life and have it more abundantly," it is the life that is that once God's in our own. And so you are the life of all that lives which is the divinity of all that lives, all people, all living things. You are that life, incarnate, and as their life and their nothingness without you. And you are the ordering of all that is. There's a kind of a spacious symphonic order to the unfoldings of nature, the patterns of time, so on. And you are that order. That order is playing itself out in these ways.

She continues. So, as she finishes this litany of seeing God's love, telling God that she sees God's love is manifested in and as all things, then God turns around and it's God's turn and here we see running through the whole book, this reciprocity of love between the soul and God. Then God praised the loving soul in fine words. So now God's saying, now God says to her, "Now it's my turn." And God takes great delight in saying this back to us.

So, God says to her, and God says to us, "You are the light of my eyes. You are the lyre to my ears. You are a voice for my words. You are a projection of my piety. You are an honor to my piety. You are a life, living in me. You are a praise in my being." Walk through this.

See, it isn't just... Sometimes in images, when parents sometimes and a small child walks into the room, they light up inside. Or when there's a loved one, a friend, a dear one that we haven't seen in a long time, and the moment we see them again, we light up inside. It isn't just that we light up inside, but somehow the presence of the beloved is the light that illumines our eyes. And God tells us, Mechtilde tells us, that's how I see you. It isn't just that I light up inside in seeing you, but you are the light of my eyes. That I pour myself out in a self-donating act, as you as the beloved. That the light of yourself shining out, as my beloved, illuminates me like this. You're a dear unto me. You're a lyre to my ears. That it's your voice. It's the sound of your voice that is music to me.

The voice of the beloved. The voice of the beloved. On a personal note I was stuck by this, thought of is when Maureen died two years ago, I used to have pictures of her here and I'm used to that now. I'm fine with it. But I remembered that there was an audio video of our wedding and a Holy Spirit Retreat Center and I put it in. I couldn't bear to hear her voice. Just to hear her voice, I started crying. I had to turn it off, that somehow the voice carries with it the presence of the person that touches us, the living word, this logos, that is the very presence of the beloved. You are a voice to

my words.

Also, I think, you're a voice to my words in that when you say things that console and help others, it is me speaking through you using your voice to speak through you, to say the words that help others, God tells us. Your projection, or you are the manifested presence of my piety. That your devotional sincerity is the manifested presence of my infinite devotional sincerity towards you, in sustaining you forever is my beloved. You are an honor to my piety. That is, you're the sincerity of the way you walk your walk, is an honor to the deep piety of devotional love that I feel for you, is my beloved. You are a life living in me. It isn't just that God is the infinite life, giving himself to us as our life. But because that is so, God tells us that we are a life, living in the infinite life of God, life unto life.

You are a praise to my being. That our very presence, just who we are, the mystery of identity of who we are, is the praise of God's very being, giving us our identity, giving us our reality, as a person created by God in the image and likeness of God.

Hearing this then, Mechtild says to God, "Lord, you are constantly lovesick for me. That you have clearly shown personally. You have written me into your book of the Godhead. You have painted me in your humanity. You have buried me in your side, in your hands and feet. Allow me, dear one to pour balsam upon you." Just walk through this. She says, to the God is the beloved. "Lord, you're constantly lovesick for me."

Paraphrasing it, you're freely chosen to be so hopelessly in love with me, that you are letting me know you honestly don't know how you could handle being God without me. That you're lovesick for me. And so God freely chose to create her, to create me, to create you, as the one that God freely chosen not to be able to live without, as the beloved.

And so this infinite love is lovesick for us and longs for us and that you have shown me this personally and you have written me into your book of the Godhead and the book of the Godhead is the book that God is dictating to her, the flowing light of the Godhead. And you're written in this book. You're the one who gave it the title, this. But also, you've written me in your book of the Godhead. And here you can see the Eckhart, the Dominican influence of the Godhead. So you have written me into the abyss-like depths of yourself, making the abyss-depths of yourself, to be the abyss-like depths of myself. That the generosity of the infinite is infinite and we are the generosity of God. We are the song God sings. And so you have made the abyss-like depths of yourself to be the abyss-like depths of myself, in this oneness of the godhead, beyond the Trinity, beyond words, beyond explanation.

You have painted me into your humanity, like... The cross has this lovely image sitting in prayer and imagine you sit very still that God is delicately etching the image of God on your heart, as you sit there given over to this silent love.

You have buried me in your side and now here we see illusions to the crucifixion to Jesus. See you, buried me into your side. So we were saying in an earlier reflection, it

says that when Jesus died, they pierced his heart with a lance and blood and water flowed out as in the birth of a child. And when the blood and water flowed out at the birth of the child, there was no more Jesus left in Jesus. And when there was no more Jesus left in Jesus, the only Jesus that was ever really there is manifested unexplainably throughout the world to this day.

And so when Jesus says, "Come follow me," some call, "Follow me," He's calling us to be emptied by love at the hands of love, until nothing's left of us but love. And into your hands and feet, the wounds in Christ's hands and feet, the wounds which are these wounds of love. We saw this so strongly in Julian of Norwich.

It's very interesting too, I think poetically, that when Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus rose with his wounds, the internality of suffering. But it is the wounds in glory that is the internality of the suffering transformed in and taken up into this glory. It isn't just the time will be no more. The suffering will be no more. And these hands of which he speak, these are my very hands. They're your very hands. It's like when we look at the palms of our own hands, we're looking at the mystery.

Martin Heidegger has this understanding. He said, "There's two ways to understand the horizon. One is the horizon is the point beyond which we can't see." So am I here looking out at the ocean right now, I can't see beyond the horizon, as I look out the window. And this is true.

He said, "Another way to look at the horizon is where the unmanifested is manifesting itself." And so when you look at the palms of your own hands, the palms of your own hands are God's horizon. Your very hands are God's horizon. Your very feet. You're the very immediacy of yourself, incarnate infinity, intimately realized.

"You have buried me in your side and your hands and your feet. Allow me, dear one," she's saying to God, "To pour balsam upon you." That is to ease you and your longing for me and you're longing for all of humanity to pour this balsam, this healing balsam.

Then God says to her, Oh, one dear to my heart, where shall you find the balm to ease my longings for you, my longings for all of humanity?" And she says to God in her zeal, "Oh Lord, I'm going to tear the heart of my soul in two and intend to put you into it." I love that phrase, the heart of my soul. If our soul is the interiority of ourself, created by God in the image and likeness of God, the heart of our soul is the innermost hidden center of our soul and she's tearing our soul apart, to put God's longing and there is the balm to ease the longing that it might be fulfilled there.

An image I have of this too, you ever notice that there's someone you love very much and they're slipping away from you in some way, tragically or in death, whatever, and they're on a course of being done in. Your love for them, you're beside yourself. You would do anything to try to save them. You would do anything to put them at ease. You would do anything to save them from distress, like the urgency of love. And so she's speaking out of that urgency. "I would turn my soul in two and put you into it."

And then God says to her, "You could never give me a more soothing balsam than to let me unceasingly lie weightlessly in your soul." So God says, "I'm touched by the zeal of your

enthusiasm, but you know what? There'd be no greater balm than for you to let me rest weightlessly in your soul."

And to me, I think it's what I see in it, is that God is resting in our soul. God is all about us and God is within us, closer to us than we are to ourselves. God is within us. But to let God be within us, is to ascent to that, is to ascent, to let God. And what's it mean, let God rest. It's without a should. It is without some sense we have to overcome something before God rests in us. We have to attain something before God rests in us. We have to... Thomas Vernon said at the monastery, "We're all walking around with the secret little list inside. Once I stop doing this and this and this and this, God and I will really get close. Once I begin to do this and this and this, God and I will really get close." And he said, "The thing is to realize, with God, there's no list. It's already finished. It's already over. God's infinitely in love for you, forever and ever and ever, like this."

And so just let me rest there in you, wordlessly, which is really a poet metaphor for Heaven, for all of eternity. This resting without answers, or shoulds, or needs or anything.

She says, "Then Lord, if you were to take me home with you, I would be your physician forever." So in a way it's interesting. You see how love language is like this sometimes. In a way he just said this to her, God just said this to her, but she's back again to God longing for her and God freely choosing to longing for her and God not resting until we are completely surrendered over and one with God.

And so she says, "Lord, take me home with you. I'll be your physician forever. For I know you have freely chosen, as your beloved, that you cannot bear to be without me." And so she reverses the salvific act. That is Jesus is the divine physician who heals the wounds of our soul, which is love deprivation. So, she turns it around and we're now healing God's longing for us. Jesus from the cross, "Father, forgiven thy know not what they do."

And so, God is infinitely poured out and freely choosing to be surrendered over, to being unable to bear, to be God without us. But at the same time remembering, even though God's infinitely poured out in this way, God remains sovereign. God remains more than any possible thing that's created. God's infinitely more than the most. And so God who's infinitely more than the most, is simultaneously freely choosing. This is lady love. See, this is the sovereignty of God given to us with the intimate tenderness, with which God seeks us out in the intimacy of silent prayer of our sincerity, of our days.

And she ends this way. "Lord, see, if you were to take me home with you, I'd be your physician forever." And God responds back, "Yes." He says, "I want that." He says, "I want that. Still my solicitude, bid you wait. My love, bid you labor. My patience, bid you to keep silent. My concern, bid you to suffer poverty. My dishonor, bid you to bear up. My sufficiency, bid you refrain from complaint. My victory, bid you pursue to the end of all virtues. My goal, bid you endure many things. For this, you shall have glory, when I remove your heavy burden." That's how it ends. I want to walk through this final thing.

You take me home with you and I'll be your physician forever. And God says, "Yes, I want that." Still, or maybe we might say and yet, God is saying, and God's infinite solicitude for her, for us, God bid us, God bids her to wait.

T.S. Eliot says in *Four Quartets*, he says, “To hope too soon is to hope for the wrong thing.” We might say, to love too soon is almost like you’re not yet ready for love. Why? You haven’t loved enough and you haven’t been loved enough and you’re not surrendered to love enough.

And so yes, I want that, but my solicited for you waits until you’re further purified by this love. See, purified by love at the hands of love to there’s nothing left of you but love. And so wait and let the unraveling of love happen. See to it that you can’t love and live on your own terms and more and more and more, God says, we can learn from the infinite love of God, how to live by love alone, in the intimate unfoldings and details of our daily life.

And so the waiting then is a purifying waiting and God’s one with us in the waiting and God’s one who’s keeping us waiting, knowing that in the waiting we are being unexplainably transformed in love.

My love, God’s love, God speaking. My love bid you to labor. But what kind of labor is this? I think it’s this. One is certainly we labor in that we do love’s work. See all things considered, what’s the most loving thing I can do right now for my body, for my mind, for this person, for this family, for society, for the world, for this plant, for this animal. There’s that.

But there’s also another kind of labor in that when we sit in meditation, our hands are at rest in our lap. Our hands are at rest in our lap because this is Sabbath. This is freely choosing, as an activity, to passively be surrendered over to God’s activity in us. It’s like Mary, the Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee. And she says, “Let it be done unto me according to thy word.” It’s a kind of paradoxical activity of freely surrendering, as an act of freedom, to this love that’s giving itself to us.

And so my love bid you to labor. This love’s labor. This labor of this love filled act activity of waiting surrendered over to this love. My patience bid you to keep silent. God’s patience bid you to keep silence.

Once years ago I was attending a Zen Christian meditation week-long retreat by a Jesuit priest. He was a zen sensei from the Netherlands, Hans. I can’t think of his last name. And in this little dharma talk that he was giving, this was like meditation intensive retreat, like meditating six hours a day kind of thing. He said, this is how I remembered. I’ll paraphrase it. He said that there’s imposed silence, there’s chosen silence and eternal silence. And in my sense there’s imposed silence, in which we’re being violated, in that we’re being kept silent because if we say the truth will be punished. It’s an imposed silence. You dare not speak.

There’s another kind of imposed silence out of respect. It’s imposed out of respect, such as at a prayer service, or at a funeral, or in a library anywhere. It’s imposed, but it’s imposed as an act of kindness for respect for others.

And likewise, there’s a chosen silence. Again, there’s a positive and negative version of this. There is the negative version of chosen silent, is when evil is going on. You’re collusion with the evil by keeping silent like this. And I know this is a delicate matter, as you kind of weigh out the consequences and how to sort that out, and so it’s not even sincerely thinking it through to be prophetically present to speak up in how that you would say that.

But there’s also a chosen silence, in that we choose the silence that allows us to listen to

God speaking in us. Another way to say it is this. Martin Buber says in, *I and Thou*, “Often what passes for a dialogue is just interrupted monologue.” When two people are arguing, sometimes they don’t even let each other finish their sentences. In order to hear someone, we have to listen. In order to listen, we need to be silent.

G.K. Chesterton, he once said, “We’re bored to death by a story repeated over and over that we’d never really ever listened to.” And so this deep listening, this is the listening of *Lectio*, this very deep listening. And here we’re speaking of, there is eternal silence, and so this is a deep silence of listening to the eternal silence of God, a silence out of which God is speaking us and the whole world into being forever.

When I was in the monastery, there was perpetual silence. We didn’t talk to each other. We used sign language was when I was there and it was just perpetual silence. There was a chanting of the Psalms, but we lived in silence. And once Thomas Merton, he was to give the sermon on a major feast day to the community. And he said to this whole room full of silent monks and a silent monastery, he said, “Whenever I say anything in this monastery, it humbles me. For everything said here should come out of silence.” And he said, “Everything said here should deepen the silence, which is this awe in reverence and gratitude to God speaking us and all things into being unexplainably forever.”

And also so then when we speak, so then there are words that disrupt the silence, like we can’t bear the intimacy of the silence, we intrude upon it. But then there’s words that incarnate the silence. There are words like the chanting of the Psalms, are not intrusion to the silence. The words, I love you, are not intrusions to the silence. The cry of the poor, is not intrude on the silence and the healing word doesn’t intrude. There’s a living love logos, a living word, in which the cadences and rhythms of the words and bodies, the silence, eternally speaking to us through all things to the logos, this word.

My concern, did you suffer poverty? Blessed are the poor in spirit. They shall inherit the kingdom of God. So what is this poverty? The poverty is this deep acceptance that we are powerless to bring ourself into existence. It’s the deep acceptance of the poverty we’re powerless to keep ourself in existence, as evidenced by death. We’re powerless by our own powers, to our own finite powers, to consummate the union that was awakened in us by the infinite love of God, for our finite powers have no residence or compatibility with this infinite love. That’s a dilemma, a spiritual awakening. We’re awakened by the infinite to the infinite. And awakened by the infinite in a way that our finite powers are powerless to actualize this union of desiring this infinite union with infinite love.

But it’s a deep acceptance of our poverty. It’s the portal through which this infinite love shines through and is incarnate, in and as, empowers the poverty of our finite waves. As awkward or indirect as they might be, they might be that, it’s just another one of these kind of bittersweet interplays of love, like lived out in the patterns of our daily life.

“My dishonor, bid you bear up.” And here I think there’s this illusion here then to the cross under the crucifixion. That in the cross, we see that Jesus reveals that God’s response to us in our dilemma, namely that we’re exiled from this habitual underlying realization of God’s endless oneness with us, that alone is ultimately real. And then we act out that exile by the traumatizing things we do to ourselves and to each other, are the suffering ways of this

world; broken humanity.

And so God's response. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us." God's response is to become identified with us as precious in our dilemma. Not precious waiting for us to get past the dilemma but we're already present when we're still in the dilemma, like this. So that in the encounter with Jesus or the encounter with experiential salvation is that Jesus, or the infinite love of God, sees the brokenness better than we do, sees through it to see in us as invincible, preciousness, as infinitely more real than the brokenness, as broken as we might be, like this.

And so bear up. Bear up. It's not easy. It's not easy. Everyone goes to their own abandonments. Everyone goes to their own injustices. Everyone goes to their own thing and not being really seen the way we are of people who, whatever. And sometimes we unwittingly treat others that way too. We try not to, but we act this out on each other. And so bear up. See, bear because it builds character. It builds character. It strengthens us in character.

"My sufficiency bid you refrain from complaint." She said this in the previous Session Two, we read about that she tells God, "You've taken away my friends, my life, everything. What you've done is you've taken away everything that's less than you, to be enough for me to be at rest without you. I see what you've taken away." And he said, "That's a petty complaint."

So here again, see my sufficiency, did you refrain from complaint? Why? Because nothing's missing. Nothing's missing because this infinite love and giving the infinite love of myself, Merton says, beating through your very blood whether you want it to or not, in the sun moving across the sky, standing up and sitting down. Jesus says, it's all me, like this. What's impaired is your ability to see that, to see this love. And that's what this path is about. That you're healed from all that hindered you from seeing this fullness of love, that is being poured out in endlessly varied ways, in each moment of our life, on up to death and beyond.

"My victory, bid you pursue to the end of all virtues." That is my victory, which is the resurrection. My victory over suffering, my victory over death, is for you to pursue to the end of all virtues. Remember we were saying the end of all virtues is strength. To the end of all virtues, the end of strength, to all the ways you depend on my strength. Without me, you can't do nothing. At the end of all virtues, the paradoxical virtue of freely surrendering to this love that freely surrenders to us, and to pursue that until the end to shall we see for ourself here all along, nothing ever was missing. It's being poured out, unexplainably.

My goal, did you endure many things? And what are things? Remember, to endure the complexities and the realities of daily life. That the details of the day is a thing. The furniture in the room is a thing. The house payment and mortgage payment is a thing. Going to work out every day is a thing. The troubling aspect of the thing. Being behind on our schedule is a thing. Things. Things all around us. These things. My goal is for you to endure many things because if you endure many things, that is all the finite details of the day, you're able by enduring them patiently, to see that they're ephemeral. They're all passing away, just like the you that identifies with them as passing away.

And once you see their contingent, once you see their fleetness, God says, "Then we see

God shining out through everything.” And God is a reality in and as everything and it’s nothingness without God.

In the rule of Saint Benedict *Ora et labora*, to prayer and pray and into work *labora*. And so the daily work is not a rude intrusion in the mystical union. Because when we work, if you ever noticed, we cannot work and live entirely on our own terms. At the end of the day, there’s always a few pieces unfinished. We meet the concreteness of life itself and God’s waiting for us to meet God there in the midst of the work, with an inner peace, it’s free from the outcome. We just lean into it and do our best and get up the next day and do it again, as best we can. Like this, as love’s work; *labora*.

“For this, you shall have glory when I remove your heavy burden.” And what is this? What is this? It’s all of this. For all this, namely your life. For everything that you’ve gone through up till now, up to this very moment, he’s telling her of this very moment, you’re writing these words in this book. And this very moment, the centuries later, I’m reading it to you and you’re listening to it. See, God tells us for all of this, for all of your life, all of her life, all of my life, for all of this, you shall have glory when I remove your heavy burden. And what is the burden? The burden is the burden that hinders your realization to see the true love that nothing is missing.

And another way that I put it, sometimes it isn’t just the burden where the thorn in the... Where we can’t quite give up what compromises our heart, these patterns that we have, that keeps us humble and dependent on God’s mercy. But I think it’s also the burden that we’re addicted to finiteness. That is, we’re addicted to who our finite self is and finite circumstances. Having the last say in who we are is the heavy burden in our heart and it’s love that lifts the burden.

So I think in the stages of dying, Elizabeth Kübler Ross, the stages of dying, like denial and bargaining and anger and depression and so on, that’s the ego coming to the end of itself. She says, “But when you come to acceptance, come to acceptance, it’s freedom from death. It’s free from the tyranny of death, in the midst of death. And that’s God lifting the heavy burden from the dying loved one’s heart. And you look into their face, it’s the gate of heaven.”

So why wait? Love says, why wait until the 11th hour? Because the very desire, to have, God says, the very desire to have God lift the heavy burden from our heart is itself God, given to us as the desire to lift the burden from our heart. And that very desire to lift it, then it’s already lifted. And insofar as we still feel the weight of it, that’s the thorn in the flesh that teaches us love’s ways, depending on God’s mercy, guiding us unexplainably through these depths of love.

So, let’s end then with a sit meditation. I invite you to sit straight and fold your hands and bow.

I slowly say the Lord’s Prayer together. Our Father, who are in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us to 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.

Mary, Mother of Contemplatives, pray for us. Master Eckhart, pray for us. Mechtild of Magdeburg, pray for us. Blessings, till next time.

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 podcasts at 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.