

Living well through Advent

Week Four

Thursday 22 December 2022

Bowing and Bending

When true simplicity is gained,

*To bow and to bend, we will not be
ashamed.*

Joseph Brackett, Simple Gifts

These next lines from Simple Gifts remind us that one manifestation of simplicity is: “to bow and bend we will not be ashamed.” In the Christian tradition, as in other religious faiths, bowing is a sign of reverence, respect, and love. One recent manifestation of this came to light during the pandemic within the worship services of many churches. In churches that exchange a sign of the “Peace of Christ” with one another, people would share the peace by bowing to one another rather than by shaking hands as they usually would.

When we think of bending, let’s think of being flexible. When we are grounded in the simplicity of God’s love, we know that we are much more flexible, willing, and open to listen to others, reconsider our position, and even change if needed. In fact, one of the ways we know we are not grounded in God’s love is that we become rigid and inflexible. In such a state, we can rarely bow or bend to others, or even to God.

Let us also call attention to the final words of this section from Simple Gifts, the words “will not be ashamed.” The essential point of these words is that as an expression of our faith, we bow and bend in a spirit of love, reverence, and respect, not from a place of shame or guilt. When we are grounded in God’s love, we want to, and freely choose to, offer the gift of bowing and bending to others.

Now take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

- ◆ Plans don’t often go as expected during the holidays, so how might you have the opportunity to bend and be flexible right now?
- ◆ What difference do you see in offering the gift of bowing and bending because you choose to, rather than from a place of feeling like you have to?

SIMPLE GIFTS

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend, we will not be ashamed.*