

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

The Language Of Love

By Ken Woodley

A handful of years ago, I bought an English/Aramaic dictionary because I wanted to learn something of the language of Jesus.

Feel how some of the words that he spoke felt on my lips and tongue.

How they sounded in my voice, but imagining I was able to hear him, instead.

If we were able to journey back in time to the hillsides, shore and mountains along the Sea of Galilee, of course, we wouldn't understand a word that Jesus was saying.

We'd have to decipher the meaning by listening carefully to the timbre of his voice.

By the look in his eyes toward us as he spoke them.

And from the reaction by those around us who understood the language but were, in many cases, stunned by the meaning of what Jesus was saying.

All of his words were turning the world upside down and inside out in ways that were as unexpectedly hopeful as a second sunrise on a day that had promised only total eclipse.

So, I decided to translate one of The Beatitudes from English into Aramaic. I don't know how successful I was but I do know the words are genuinely Aramaic. They are the language Jesus spoke every day.

I don't have a pronunciation guide for the vowels and combinations of consonants, so I guess at the exact sound of the words, just as you may do now:

“wSalxani imassayu latbirai libba tubaihon labile dhinnon itbayun.”

Or: Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

I have written that sentence at the end of Compline in the Book of Common Prayer by my bedside. I read Compline every night and the last words I speak, quietly but aloud, are those that Jesus spoke.

It is a humble exercise. I only want to ensure that at least once, somewhere in this world, the language of Jesus is heard speaking one of Christ's sentences of love.

It would be beautiful if you'd join me so that we can become a chorus, speaking the language of love. Jot them down. Put them in your prayer book or Bible. Speak them some time.

Whatever the words say—even if I've botched the translation—what they mean to us as we speak them in remembrance of him is all that matters.

And maybe speaking with Jesus' voice will help us walk those words out into the world with greater strength and purpose in the morning.

I do know that hearing them every night brings Jesus a little closer to me as I turn out the light and let the stars above shine wherever they can to all who are praying in the darkness to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to them.

Jesus answering our own quiet prayer in the suddenly bright night.