

difficult. See how nature has a twofold purpose for every member of our body. The first function which it performs is to serve the whole body of which it is a part and then to serve each other individual member no less than itself, and it considers its own interests in its action no more than it does those of any other member. Now this should be far more the case in the world of grace. God should be the rule and the foundation of your love. The first intention of your love should be directed solely towards God first and then towards your neighbour and yourself, but your neighbour no less than yourself. If you love blessedness in yourself more than in another, this is wrong, for if you love blessedness in yourself more than in another, then you love yourself, and where you love yourself, God is not your sole love, and that is wrong. For if you love the blessedness in St Paul and St Peter as you do in yourself, then you possess the same blessedness which they have. And if you love the blessedness in the angels as in yourself, and the blessedness in Our Lady, then you truly enjoy the same blessedness in yourself as they do. It is yours as much as it is theirs. Therefore we read in the Book of Wisdom: 'He made him like his saints' (Si. 4:52).

The third meaning of 'make the best of everything' is: 'love God equally in all things'. This means to say that we should love him just as willingly in poverty as in wealth, in sickness as in health. We should love him just as much when we are living through a time of trial as when we are not, when we suffer as when we do not. Indeed, the greater the suffering, the less we suffer, as with two buckets. The heavier one bucket is, the lighter the other, and the more we give, the easier giving becomes. For someone who loves God, it would be just as easy to give up the whole world as it would be to give up an egg. The more we give, the easier it is to do so, as was the case with the apostles. The greater the suffering which befell them, the easier it was for them to endure.

'Labour in all things.' This means: where you find yourself dependent on multiple things and not on pure, naked and simple being, there you should exert yourself and 'labour in all things' 'in the performing of your service' (2 Tim. 4:5). That is tantamount to 'lift your head up', which has two meanings. The first is 'shed everything which is yours and take possession of God, then God will belong to you as he belongs to himself, and he will be your God' as he is his own God, no less'. What is mine comes to me from no one. But if I have it from someone else, then it is not mine but rather it is that person's from whom I have it. The second meaning is 'lift your head up!', which is 'dedicate all your works to God'. There are many people who do not understand this, which does not surprise me at all, since in order to understand this someone would have to be very detached and raised above all the things of this world.

That we may come to this perfection, so help us God. Amen.

Meister Eckhart: Selected
(Trl: Davies) Writings
(1994)

SERMON 5 (DW 53, W 22)

Misit dominus manum suam et tetigit os meum et dixit mihi, etc.

Ecce constitui te super gentes et regna (Jer. 1:9, 10)

'The Lord stretched out his hand and touched my mouth and spoke to me.'

When I preach, I am accustomed to talk about detachment, saying that we should become free of ourselves and of all things. Secondly, I say that we should be in-formed back into the simple goodness, which is God. Thirdly, I say that we should be mindful of the great nobility which God has given the soul in order that we should become wonderfully united with him.

Fourthly, I speak of the purity of the divine nature, and of the radiance within it which is ineffable. God is a word: an unspoken word.

Augustine says: 'the whole of Scripture is in vain. If it is said that God is a word, then he is spoken, but if it is said that God is unspoken, then he is ineffable.'¹⁹ But God is something, yet who can speak this word? No one can but he who is the word. God is a word which speaks itself. Wherever he is, he speaks this word, and where he is not, he does not speak it. God is both spoken and unspoken. The Father is speaking work, and the Son is working speech. What is in me, goes out of me: if I think something, then my speech reveals it and yet it remains within. In the same way the Father speaks the Son who remains unspoken and remains in him. I have said this repeatedly: God's going out is his coming in. The closer I am to God, the more he speaks himself in me. The more we rational creatures go out of ourselves in our works, the more we enter into ourselves. This is not the case with physical creatures:²⁰ the more they act, the more they go out of themselves. All creatures wish to speak God in all their works. They all speak as well as they can, but they cannot speak him. Whether they wish to or not, like it or not, even though they all want to speak God, he remains unspoken.

David says: 'The Lord is his name' (Ps. 68:4). 'Lord' means the setting up of a supremacy here, while 'servant' is a form of subjection. Certain names are proper to God, such as 'God', and are detached from all other things. 'God' is his truest name, just as 'human being' is our name. We are always human, whether we are foolish or wise. Seneca says: 'That man or woman is wretched who does not transcend their humanity.'²¹ Certain names signify properties which are attributed to God, such as 'son' or 'father'. When we think of a father, we think simultaneously of a son. There cannot be a father without a son, nor a son without a father; but both contain within themselves an eternal essence

which is beyond time. Thirdly, certain names signify both a looking up to God and a turning towards time. God has many names in Scripture. But I say that if someone perceives something in God and gives it a name, then that is not God. God is above names and nature. We read of a good man who turned to God in his prayer and wished to give him a name. Then a brother said to him, 'Be silent! You are dishonouring God!' There is no name we can devise for God. But some names are permitted to us, with which the saints have addressed him and which God has so consecrated in their hearts and bathed in a divine light. And here we should learn first of all how we should approach God. We should say: 'Lord, with the same names which you have so consecrated in the hearts of your saints and bathed in your light, we approach you and praise you.' Secondly, we should learn that there is no name we can give God so that it might seem that we have praised and honoured him enough, since God is 'above names' and is ineffable.

The Father speaks the Son with the whole of his power and speaks all things in him. All creatures are the utterance of God. If my mouth speaks and declares God, so too does the being of a stone, and we understand more by works than by words. Lower nature cannot comprehend the work which the highest nature performs by its most exalted power. If it could perform this itself, then it would itself be the highest nature. All creatures wish to echo God in all their works, but they can reveal him only a little. Even the way that the highest angels rise up and touch God is as different from what is in God as black is from white. The totality of what each and every creature has received is also quite different from what is in God, even though they all desire to declare the nearest approximation to it that they can. The prophet says: 'God spoke one thing but I heard two.' When God speaks in the soul, then he and the soul are one, but as soon as this state of oneness falls away, division ensues. The higher we ascend with our knowledge, the more we are one in him.

Therefore the Father always speaks the Son in unity and pours forth all creatures in him. They all clamour to return to that place from which they emerged. Their whole life and being is a clamouring and a hastening back to him from whom they were born.

The prophet says: 'The Lord has stretched forth his hand' (Jer. 19) and refers with these words to the Holy Spirit. Now he says: 'He has touched my mouth', and then: 'He has spoken to me' (Jer. 19). The 'mouth' of the soul is the soul's highest part, which is what is meant here, and the soul says: 'He has placed his word in my mouth' (Jer. 19). This is the kiss of the soul, when mouth is joined to mouth, when the Father gives birth to the Son in the soul and the soul is 'spoken to'. Now he says: 'Take heed. Today I have chosen you and have raised you above nations and kingdoms' (Jer. 170). In a 'today' God promises to choose us, where there is nothing and where, nevertheless, there is a 'today' in eternity. 'And I have raised you above nations', which means over the whole world, which you must be free of, and 'over kingdoms', which means that everything which is more than the One is too much, for you must die to all things and must be in-formed into the heights where we dwell in the Holy Spirit.

So help us God, the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SERMON 6 (DW 58, W 44)

Qui mihi ministrat, me sequatur, et ubi ego sum, illic et minister meus erit

(Joh. 12:26)

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words: 'Whoever serves me should follow me, and wherever I am, there should my servant be also.' These words tell us three things. The first is that we should follow and serve our Lord when he says: 'whoever serves me should follow me'. Therefore these words apply well to St

Secundus, whose name means 'he who follows God', for he gave up his possessions, his life and all things for God's sake. In the same way those who wish to follow God should abandon whatever might hinder them. Chrysostom says: These are challenging words for those who have embraced this world and material things, which are sweet to possess but difficult and bitter to part with.²² This shows us how demanding it is for certain people, who know nothing of spiritual things, to turn from the things of the world. As I have said often before: why does the ear not enjoy the taste of sweet things as does the mouth? Because it is not equipped to do so. For the same reason someone who lives in the flesh cannot perceive spiritual things. On the other hand, it is easy for an insightful person who understands the things of the spirit to free themselves from material things. St Denys says that God offers his heaven for sale,²³ but nothing is as cheap as heaven, when it is for sale, and nothing is as exalted and as delightful to possess when it has been earned. Heaven is cheap because it is on sale to everyone at the price they can afford. Therefore we should give all that we have for heaven, especially our own self-will. As long as we still cling to our self-will, we have not yet earned heaven. But for those who abandon themselves and their self-will it is easy to part from material things. I have often told you the story of how a master instructed his disciple on how to perceive spiritual things. The disciple said: 'I am raised up by your teaching and understand that all material things are like a small ship which is thrown about by the waves, or like a bird tossed on the wind.' For all spiritual things are higher than material ones, and the higher they are, the more they encompass the material.²⁴ Therefore material things are small with respect to spiritual ones, and the higher the spiritual ones are, the greater they are, and the more potent they are in works, the purer they are in their being. I have often said the following, which is a sure truth, that if someone were famished to the point of death and