



SIEBENQUELL

When the heart stretches



These days I live in a house that is filled with a soothing atmosphere on the inside, but also through the world that comes in through the large windows: the changing sky, the meadows, forests in autumnal colours. Here in this secluded house, I am given a sense of security and hospitality and at the same time a sense of spaciousness. It is soothing for the heart and mind. A lively tranquillity pervades the place and at the same time my gaze is repeatedly drawn out into the beauty of the surrounding nature.

I think we are made for expansiveness, not for narrowness, compartmentalisation and walls. Every breath expands my chest, just as every glance outwards expands my mind and heart. I gratefully recognise the blessing of this experience, because I also know times when my heart is small and narrow: when I am afraid of losing something, when I worry that what I need to live is not enough. Then my heart tenses up, it throbs up to my ears, it labours, it »only« wants enough attention, love, security or perhaps not to lose a perceived special status. The fear creeps into me that others are taking something from me that I am entitled to and that it is not enough for me to live on. My heart gets tighter and tighter . . .

We all know the story of the labourers in the vineyard which Jesus recounts in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 20, 1-16).

From early in the morning, the vineyard owner recruits new labourers. He settles the day's wages with the first ones, and the last ones start work hours later. When their wages are paid in the evening, the last receive the same daily wage as the labourers who started the day before. They complain and grumble. We understand that well. It's unfair - the same pay for less effort! And like the grumblers, we're puzzled by the landowner's reply: Isn't that what we agreed? Are you missing out on something? Are you being short-changed? Or are you merely envious because the others also get what they need to live? Why are you comparing yourselves to each other? Isn't it enough for each of you?

The heart of the landowner is the heart of God, not of an accountant. Overflowing and boundless, it gives everyone what they need to live. The kingdom of God begins where we allow ourselves to be infected by it. Then our hearts begin to expand and widen. When we gratefully and powerfully breathe in the life and love that is given to us, we can breathe out relaxed and joyfully and open the windows wide. At first it will be tense and painful, as it always is when we practise stretching our muscles. But gradually we become more flexible, joy moves in and love grows.

So I look up, look out and feel the peace that enters my heart.

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