

Grounded

Last Friday we had our first experience of spending an hour spraying nematodes in the garden. If that sentence means absolutely nothing to you, then join me now on a very brief learning curve. (Keen gardeners amongst us will need no explanation and may choose to skip to paragraph 3)

Nematodes, I have learned, are very tiny worms, less than 1 millimetre in length, and they happily live in the soil. They have a great appetite for some bugs and beetles or their larvae. At home we have been advised that, unbeknown to ourselves, we are hosting vine weevils in the soil, and these little fellows are munching happily on leaves and roots; not great for the garden. A super abundance of nematodes was the answer apparently. So, we followed advice and reinforcements were called in. We trust they are even now dining with gusto.

The earth is quite amazing, and scientists are still exploring the multitude of organisms that live in the soil beneath our feet. We depend on this soil for the very food we eat. Our recent celebration of harvest reminded us of that – along with the vital balance, often precarious, needed for a reliable supply for everyone. Our weeny weevil problem is pretty insignificant in the greater scheme of things.

The earth supplying food, the ground we walk on, the foundation of all our buildings and lives, like so much that is vital for our lives, we take for granted – we just walk all over it! Yet with every step we are connected to the ground hopefully anyway! As long as I have a physical body and gravity keeps doing its thing, I will stay in contact with this earth. (OK, with maybe the occasional jet-propelled launch into the atmosphere, then trusting in a safe return to *terra firma*.)

Paul Tillich, the German-American philosopher and theologian coined a description of God as 'The Ground of our Being'. It may not resonate with everyone, but for me this image is deeply powerful and inspiring. It helps me find meaning and connection when some of the more familiar and traditional images of God can seem lacking. Admittedly it is harder to feel personal relationship within this image – and Jesus' modelling of relating to 'Father God' is deeply important. However, I also have the need to know the immediate earthiness, the organic growthfulness, the sustained rootedness of God infused in the whole of life and '*being our root and ground*'. That is not to say that the earth is God (pantheism), but that we are grounded in God, our source and sustainer.

It concerns me, as I know it concerns many, that there seems to be a surge of those who are adopting Christianity for nationalistic, power-based, aggressive purposes. (And as a recent report showed, few of these people actually attend church or engage in local Christian communities *) Furthermore, there are world leaders – usually men it must be said - who relate to, and seek to emulate, an all-powerful, warlike, vengeful image of God. It isn't hard to find support for this in many parts of the bible as ancient writers grappled with who God is.

How would it be if our understanding of God was less about power, more about grounded-ness, less about a fixer of problems, and more about conditions for growth, less about revenge, and more about reaching down to tend and care for tiny signs of life? The bible also supports this understanding, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Christians are followers of one who literally walked this earth. Jesus, God incarnate.

What does walking on the ground feel like, what does being a follower of Jesus mean, when God is the very source and ground of who we are?

* [Christian nationalism in Britain driven by people who seldom go to church, says report | Christianity | The Guardian](#) 11/10/26