

St James News: Thought for the day – Friday 28th August 2020

The Fifth Day – Jill Howard-Gunasekera

The poem, below, by Jane Hirshfield, was read on the National Mall in Washington, DC, as part of the March for Science on Earth Day, April 22nd, 2017. She wrote it on the fifth day of Donald Trump's presidency, when information on climate change was removed from the White House website and scientists at the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), [National Park Service](#), [department of agriculture](#) and other federal agencies were ordered to release no further research information without permission.

Scientists at [Badlands National Park](#), in South Dakota, began unofficially tweeting factual information that day, and scientists at many governmental agencies and universities began copying research files on to back-up servers. On the Fifth Day first appeared in the [Washington Post](#)

My impression of Jesus was that he was often getting told off, one day some Pharisees asked him to tell his disciples off for cheering him on:

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples" in other words, 'tell them to be quiet'.
"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Luke 19:39-40

On the fifth day

On the fifth day
the scientists who studied the rivers
were forbidden to speak
or to study the rivers.

The scientists who studied the air
were told not to speak of the air,
and the ones who worked for the farmers
were silenced,
and the ones who worked for the bees.

Someone, from deep in the Badlands,
began posting facts.

The facts were told not to speak
and were taken away.
The facts, surprised to be taken, were silent.

Now it was only the rivers
that spoke of the rivers,
and only the wind that spoke of its bees,
while the unpausing factual buds of the fruit trees
continued to move toward their fruit.

The silence spoke loudly of silence,
and the rivers kept speaking,
of rivers, of boulders and air.

In gravity, tongueless,
the untested rivers kept speaking.

Bus drivers, shelf stockers,
code writers, machinists, accountants,
lab techs, cellists kept speaking.

They spoke, the fifth day,
of silence.

Here's an interesting report that is produced each year in the UK called 'The State of Nature' by the National Biodiversity Network, a collective of Conservation and Research organisations in the UK including the National Trust, RSPB, Woodland Trust. This is a link to its 2019 report. <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf>