

19th July 2020

Sanctuary

**“We shall cease from exploration,
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”**
T S Elliot, Four Quartets, ‘Little Gidding’

The Big Bang Theory is an American TV sitcom, centred on the eccentric lives of young scientists. One of them is Sheldon Cooper, a super-intelligent and very unpredictable young man. Sheldon has two places which are his alone: the desk-chair where he works, and the seat at the end of a three-seater couch where he relaxes, eats take-aways and plays board-games with his friends. This is uniquely Sheldon’s “spot”. He cannot and will not sit anywhere else. No one is *ever* permitted to use his spot.

In one episode, the couch-cushion gets stained and is sent off to be cleaned. Sheldon’s spot has gone. He can’t sit at his desk to eat, because that’s where he works and not where he relaxes. He crouches in the space where the cushion used to be, but it’s not right. He’s invited to sit on a similar cushion moved along the couch, but it fails to make his spot the same as it was. Sheldon simply can’t function without his spot.

We all have our favourite places – a desk in the office, a seat at the table, a chair by the fire, a corner of the staffroom. If that makes us selfish, over-possessive of our spot as it does for Sheldon, that may not be helpful. But if our spot is about sanctuary, the place where we feel we can cease our exploring and arrive where we need to be, is that not important?

Where is your place of sanctuary, the “spot” which, for a moment at least, brings you solace, meaning, understanding and peace? From a holy place – like Iona Abbey for me – to the haven of a small garden; from a favourite hill-top, to your local church; from a prayer-corner in your home, to the environs of your childhood ... we need our sanctuary-spot to enhance our spiritual lives. Sheldon cherishes his spot, just as we do. So maybe young Sheldon Cooper isn’t so unpredictable after all.

A prayer for today

*Loving God, this is my spot for now. Bless me with the meaning and purpose I seek.
Just for a moment, let me feel safe in the sanctuary of your grace and mercy. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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