

SoulSpace

SERIES: GOD IN THE EVERYDAY

Season colour: **GREEN**

In this new series, **Jim Deeds** finds evidence of the divine in the ordinary and extraordinary events of every day.

Most of us know what it means to be anxious. Some of us know what it means to have life disrupted by that anxiety. And all of us know someone who suffers from anxiety. It's nothing to be ashamed of. And yet, when anxiety messes with us, we can feel lonely. We may think we're the only one suffering in this way. We may feel far from God or that God is far from us. Here is a story about a different reality – that God is always near, loving us in the good times and bad. I've written it about a son, but it applies just as much to daughters.

There once was a loving father who had a good son. The son was talented, loving and special. But the son didn't see it that way. He was always trying to be better and better... and this made him anxious. He worried about things. Would anyone be his friend? Would he have enough lunch money? Would he do his homework well enough? He worried and got a little afraid.

He got so anxious that every morning a big rock of anxiety appeared at the foot of his bed when he woke up. It was cold, grey, spiky. The son was upset, ashamed and anxious about the rock. He thought his father wouldn't like the rock and that his friends would laugh at him. And so he hid the rock at the bottom of the garden. But when he got anxious again, another rock would appear at the foot of his bed. Every time one appeared, he would carry it secretly to the bottom of the garden and cover it up. Pretty soon, a lot of rocks were hidden in that garden. Many years went by, and the son hid his anxiety well.

As he grew to adulthood, he still got anxious at times. He was anxious about different things now. No more anxiety rocks appeared since he'd grown up, but he didn't forget about those hidden in the garden.

Something else began to happen. Every now and then, he noticed that shiny beads of confidence appeared in his pockets. Confidence feels like being strong and able to breathe easily and not being annoyed by worries. This usually happened when he relaxed and remembered the love his father had for him. He liked the shiny beads of confidence, and when they appeared, he forgot about his hidden rocks.

PART OF US

One day, he visited his father. He knocked on the door of his father's house, but there was no answer. He looked through the letterbox and saw that the back door was opened. He peered through it and saw his father working... at the bottom of the garden.

"Oh no!" he thought. "He's going to find my anxiety rocks."

The son thought about running away. But then he thought better of it. His father was kind, and he would explain what had happened. He hoped his father would understand.

He walked around the side of the house and came to the garden gate. What he saw took him by surprise. There was his father sitting at the place where he had buried the rocks. But instead of rocks, there was a pile of shiny beads of confidence identical to those that had been turning up in his pocket. The father had been chipping away at the rocks of anxiety, and he polished the chips until they shone.

The father saw the look of worry on his son's face.

"My son, don't be worried. I've known all along about your anxiety rocks."

"I hated them," said the son.

"I didn't. I loved them. I knew they were part of you and to love you was to love them, too. In fact, I knew that they needed more love than the other parts of you, so I came out here and loved them all the more. That's what transformed them into beads of confidence."

The son began to cry. Tears of sadness came and then tears of happiness. He was sad that he didn't realise the answer sooner – anxiety is not to be feared or ashamed of or shut away. It's to be seen and loved and taken care of. It's to be hugged and spoken of with those who love us. That is how anxiety rocks are transformed into shiny beads of confidence.

Most of all, though, he was happy. Happy he had a loving father who saw and loved all the parts of him. The son learned that day that he, too, could love all the parts of himself. In this way, he knew that anxiety could always be overcome. ■



Today's readings

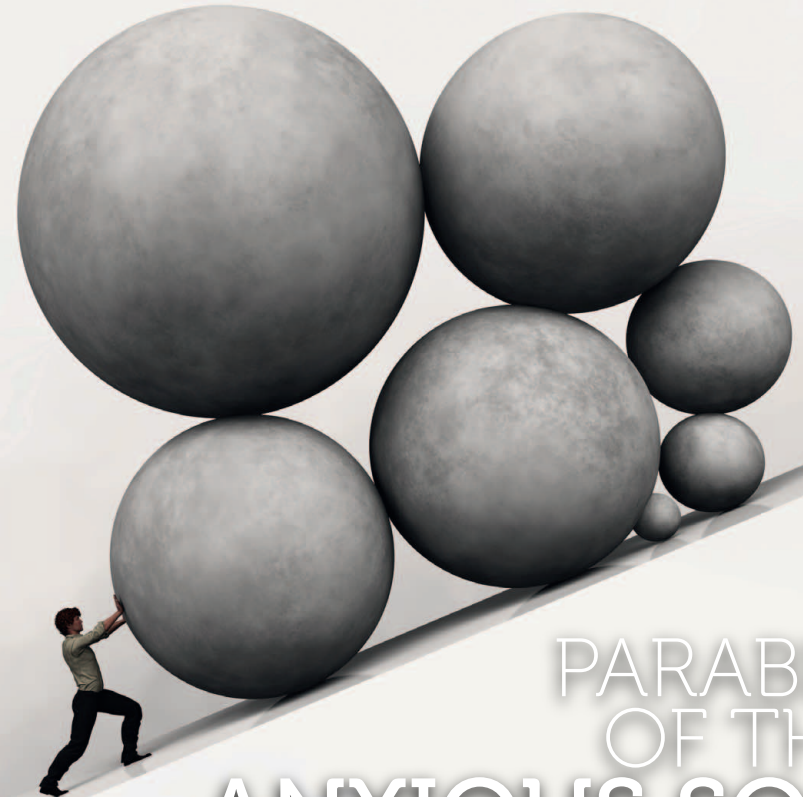
GOD'S WORD TODAY

1 Kg 17:10-16

Heb 9:24-28

Mk 12:38-44

Jesus called his disciples to let go of so much for the sake of the Gospel – trades, possessions and families. He challenged them to give their very selves for the Gospel. Above all, they were to serve others even to the point of giving their lives. The widow in today's Gospel models Jesus' idea of discipleship for all who would follow him.



PARABLE OF THE ANXIOUS SON

When anxiety messes with us, or we feel lonely or afraid, the God of love is close to us, eager to lift our burden.

