

. . . to bring to completion . . . the mystery hidden from ages past. Colossians 25-56

Turner Classic Movies came up with a real classic last weekend. It was the 1966 British film *Blow Up* with David Hemmings in the role of Thomas, a professional photographer. It's set in the Beatles era, long hair, youth and highs. Thomas is impervious to people and surroundings, stoical. As a photographer he makes good money doing commercial work, filming models in various psychedelic colors and cuts. He drives a Rolls Royce, owns a dwelling with space for staging and developing photos.

Then at dusk one evening he wanders into a park with lawns, fenced in trees, holding his camera. He sees a man and a woman at some distance in an open area and takes shots. The woman, while embracing the man, looks back toward the trees. Then she sees Thomas and runs toward him to take the roll of film. He refuses and she runs off distracted. Later he starts to develop the park film – starting with the couple embracing, then her looking back at the grove of trees. He blows up the image of the trees to see what she was looking at. It's hard to say. Blows it up bigger. Shows what appears to be the reflection of a gun. Blows it up further to show the unclear outline of a face amid the foliage. Again later – what looks like a prone human figure?

Visits the park again – and does find a body! (Dead of natural causes?) But upon a later visit there is no body. Arriving back at his studio he finds all the prints of the film torn from the walls, his residence ransacked. So after all this, you might say he is really on to something. But the more he blows up the scenes, the more vague they become; they defy certitude. The effect? *For the first time, this fellow who didn't care about anything is now concerned.* He's caring about something that draws him out of himself into a sense of mystery. This is aggravated later when students in clown outfits come along. While two enter a fenced in tennis court to do a pantomime of a tennis match, the others stand outside watching the ball go back and forth – except there is no ball. And then their invisible ball comes over the fence to land at Thomas's feet. His sense of reality has already been shaken by his inability to resolve - technically, photographically - what he thought was a murder. He pauses, picks up the "ball" and tosses it back into the tennis court, himself having arrived at a threshold of – faith or despair.

The film is really a parable of where we stand on this globe today. We have science; we have technology as we have never had it before in history. Yet are we really sure of anything? Are we actually lost in space – and isn't that exactly what the telescopes say? It leads me to wonder why Mary in today's Gospel was listening to Jesus so resolutely. Was he narrating parables akin to the one in the film? Was he telling her that *hiddenness* can lure us toward realities deeper than our everydayness? Isn't that why Jesus spoke in parables: to challenge people *who look but do not see and hear but do not listen*? Truth in its most liberating potency lies like a treasure hidden in a field or like an imperceptible pearl (that in the case of Thomas may look like an invisible tennis ball meant to make him think) -- threshold experiences like sensing the plea of a lost sheep (which is you) that make you leave the ninety nine entanglements that squander your life, allowing horizons of grace and graciousness to unfold – while you proclaim: *Rejoice with me for I have found my lost self, my lost experience of what life is all about.*

Geoff Wood