



Collects after each meditation  
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Cover Quote from *Philippians 2*

*Who, though he was in the form of God ...  
emptied himself*

# Meditations

## Lent 2010

Saint Elizabeth's Episcopal Church  
Dahlonega, Georgia



April 3, 2010

*Psalm: 31:1-4, 15-16*

*Old Testament: Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24*

*New Testament: I Peter 4:1-8*

*Gospel: John 19:38-42*

*"...Joseph of Arimathea, ... asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus."*

I was studying for math classes in Roswell, Georgia in May 1989 when I received the call. A nurse at a hospital in San Antonio, Texas, told me that I should come. I was surprised. I flew to San Antonio within a day and immediately went to the hospital. My brother was on a life support system, but he knew that I was there. Several of his internal organs were failing. The doctors told me that it was his time. He had used too many drugs in his short life (43 years). After several days of visits, I convinced the nurses to allow him to die with dignity. When he died, I was at his side reading the prayers for the dying from the Book of Common Prayer. It was hard for me. My half-sister and I arranged for his burial. My brother had died penniless.

The Gospel for today relates how Joseph of Arimathea (a secret disciple) arranged for the burial of Jesus' body. Joseph must have been in deep mourning at Jesus' death. Jesus was someone Joseph followed and loved. Joseph also wanted Jesus to be buried with dignity. Joseph was in a position to make that happen. Without Joseph's actions, the tradition of the empty tomb is meaningless.

Lloyd Cupp

Holy God, your son lived among us as one with no place to lay his head. He lived among us as one who is homeless, and to the poor, the penniless, the homeless he gave the full dignity of humanity, the image of the Creator within them. Be today especially with those who die on the streets without a home, with out companions or loved ones nearby. Assure them that they are not alone but live in the bosom of the Holy One as did Jesus our Lord, your son. Amen

February 17, 2010

*Psalm: am: 95, 32, 143; pm: 102, 130*

*Old Testament: Amos 5:6-15*

*New Testament: Hebrews 12:1-14*

*Gospel: Luke 18:9-14*

*"Two men went up into the temple to pray: One said, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, unjust, adulterers, that tax collector over there. I fast and give tithes." "The tax collector beat his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"*

The tax collector went home accepted by God.

The mind is a tricky component of our complex being. If we think we are doing right by God, the ol' pride raises its head. If we are quick to catch on that we are being self-righteous, false humility comes into play. We are condemned either way. Woe is us. But, can we be blamed? Our own society prides itself on the act of philanthropy!

Over the holidays the buzz words were, "This is how I give back to my community!" I heard self-exaltation and grew weary of hearing those words. I thought to myself, "I'm glad I'm not like that person." Woe is me! Yes the mind is a tricky part of our being. It is where our battles are fought. But! Praise be, God is not found in the mind! God is in the heart. One simply says, "God bless you," from the heart, with a smile, and walk away. There is only thanksgiving and praise. One's behavior is accepted by God.

Shelia Noah

Holy One, where I am full of the emptiness of self, fill me with the godliness of your being, in the name of the one who humbled himself not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped, Jesus, your son. Amen

*February 18, 2010*  
*Psalm: a.m.: 37:1-18; p.m. 37:19-42*  
*Old Testament: Habakkuk 3:1-18*  
*New Testament: Philippians 3:12-21*  
*Gospel: John 17:1-8*

*April 2, 2010*  
*Psalm: 22*  
*Old Testament: Isaiah 52:13-53:12*  
*Epistle: Hebrews 10:16-25*  
*Gospel: John 18:1-19:42*

“Father, the hour has come.”

Children say what is on their minds. During the waning days of the last school year, one of my students came to me when she heard I was retiring from teaching. She said, “I hope you do not retire and then go home to die.” I was slightly shaken but replied, “I hope so also.” Evidently, some of the people she knew did retire and died shortly after retiring. Jesus retired from active teaching and his body died shortly thereafter. Today’s gospel reading is the start of one of Jesus’ prayers to God. He knows he is to be sacrificed, but one of his main concerns is the destiny of his disciples after He ascends. Jesus asks God to look after them. His concern was touching to me. When my time comes, I suppose I too would be concerned about the futures of the family members who survive me. I love them and want nothing but the best for them.

Lloyd Cupp

Most gracious Father, keep us from dying suddenly and unprepared, and give us your grace that we might be enabled to teach those who come after us to die in truth, goodness, beauty, joy, and holiness of being, as he taught us. Amen

April 1, 2010

*Psalm: am: 116:1-2; pm: 116: 12-19*

*Old Testament: Exodus 12: 1-42*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26*

*Gospel: John 13:1-17; 31b-35*

*"I love the LORD, for he heard my voice...you have freed me from my chains."*

I have read this psalm in three different translations and I know from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* that this psalm is one of thanksgiving for the return to good health after a mortal illness. But more than that, I can feel the joy of the writer through his words of love and thanksgiving. Even in this somber season of Lent his praise of our God touches me in a place that words cannot describe. I only know, and feel secure in the knowledge that as long as I live, God will always hear my voice. I will never be alone or feel abandoned. And I will praise him always.

Susan Ory

Holy One, we know that to be free from sin is to be one with God as your son was one with the Father. Holy One, we know that to be free from sin is to be in relationship with the source of all being, the Loving One. Holy One, we know that as we are the sheep of your pasture the shepherd of the sheep knows us each by the name you have given us, the Holy People of God. For all of this we are grateful. Amen

February 19, 2010

*Psalm: am: 95, 31; pm: 35*

*Old Testament: Ezekial 18:1-4, 25-32*

*Epistle: Philippians 4:1-9*

*Gospel: John 17:9-19*

*"O come, let us sing to the Lord."*

Soft flakes of snow began to fall this afternoon. As the daylight faded I looked out the window at a graceful hemlock with limbs draped in white. Suddenly, a brilliant male cardinal landed on a branch of the hemlock. A single spot of red, he glowed in a world of white, grays, and black. Then he was gone as quickly as he had come.

As you read these thoughts, our front yard will be dotted with a different source of white. Every year around Ash Wednesday Lenten roses appear as if by magic. Bowing their heads on freezing mornings and lifting them on sunny afternoons, these delicate but stalwart blooms celebrate their Creator. As the flowers fade in the spring they drop seeds that bring new life. Later the broad, spreading leaves will protect a multitude of tiny plants from the summer sun. Who could have conceived such a perfect plan?

Rosalie Jensen

Creator and Source of all Being, in you we live and move and have our being; teach us the love of the poetry of your creation made for us, but not for us alone but for all your creatures to be a grace-filled home; give us the mind, the heart, and the will to care for it as you intended. Amen

February 20, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 30, 32 pm: 42, 43*  
*Old Testament: Ezekiel 39:21-29*  
*Epistle: Philippians 4:10-20*  
*Gospel: John 17:20-26*

March 31, 2010  
*Psalm: 70*  
*Old Testament: Isaiah 50:4-9a*  
*Epistle: Hebrews 12:1-3*  
*Gospel: John 13: 21-32*

*“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word...”*

I have always found the prayer which Jesus prayed near the end of his life very touching. It is so full of love. It is vivid and intimate. As his betrayal, trial, and cross, loom before him, he prays for himself, then for his disciples, and then for us! Yes!

In this third portion of the prayer, he prays for those in the future; for us and those beyond us, “... those who *will* believe...” So, before we were born, Jesus prayed for us. He prayed to God for us with faith and great confidence; and his prayer continues, exceeding time and space.

Thanks be to God!

Martha Roberts

Holy One, your son in the hour of his death prayed for us who were not yet, may our care be extended to those who will follow us by lives lived faithfully in the care of your magnificent creation, home to all who were, all who are, and all who are not yet. Amen

March 30, 2010  
*Psalm: 71:1-14*  
*Old Testament: Isaiah 49:1-7*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31*  
*Gospel: John 12:20-36*

February 21, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 63, 98; p.m.: 103*  
*Old Testament: Daniel 9:3-10*  
*Epistle: Hebrews: 2:10-18*  
*New Testament: John 12:44-50*

*“I have come as a light to the world...”*

Light and illumination are often used as metaphors for knowledge and understanding. We find this use of light throughout the Bible beginning in the creation story, *“Let there be light”*.

Light, illumination, absence of darkness, all are used to invoke an understanding of knowledge and insight and of good. Images of light are powerful. Often light is seen before or during a transformative experience. But what is Jesus telling us in this passage? I do not profess to have the answer but I think that Jesus was telling his motley crew of followers, and us, He was bringing divine knowledge and insights about how to live in the world, in our relationships, so that we could be, as He was – a light bearer to others.

As I write this I am thinking back to our Christmas Eve service where the lights were dimmed, Silent Night was played softly, the church was in darkness, we could not fully see one another, then the candle was gently and reverently passed from one to another and the darkness was dispelled.

Is this then what we are called to do? To pass light and knowledge to one another? To gently care for one another? I think so.

Annette Lowe Barber

Source of Light and Life, bearer of love to us, allow us to be leakages of your light to all the dark corners of the earth, effervescent of your love to all the love-free destinations on our ways, life givers to all the Lazaruses dead in dark caves of the earth, as your son was so graciously to us. Amen

February 22, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 41, 52; pm: 44*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 37:1-11*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:1-19*  
*New Testament: Mark 1:1-13*

March 29, 2010  
*Psalm: 36:5-11*  
*Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-9*  
*Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-15*  
*Gospel: John 12:1-11*

*“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” “Has Christ been divided?”*

The Corinthians considered themselves pretty sophisticated and knowledgeable, wise in many ways. Per Paul’s letter, it sounds like many considered themselves expert. The result was that discord arose and most soon divided themselves into rival camps, each convinced that only they knew “the right way”.

Paul’s message was simple and direct: “God is faithful; by Him you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”.

There are even more Corinthians today here among us than there were in that city almost 2,000 years ago. Each secure in his own knowledge that he is right and all others if not wrong, at least suspect. How great would it be if Paul’s simple message would again be proclaimed and we would include all without hesitancy or qualification.

Dave Bammer

Holy One, you brought us into fellowship with your son that we all might be one; give us hearts that are as open to the world in its vast diversity and multiplicity as your gift was to us; enable us to return to that primal relationship with you through your many gifts, forms, and ways that our divisions may cease. Amen

March 28, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 118:1-2, 19-29; p.m.: 31: 9-16*

*Old Testament: Isaiah 50: 4-9a*

*Epistle: Philippians 4: 5-11*

*Gospel: Luke 19: 28-40 am, Luke 23:1-49 pm*

February 23, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 45; p.m.: 47, 48*

*Old Testament: Genesis 37:12-24*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:20-31*

*New Testament: Mark 1:14-28*

*“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”*

I picked this day’s devotional in December, blind to it’s scripture selection. It was devastating to find that this selection had me contemplating the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and doing so even as we were celebrating his birth at Christmas. In our journey through Lent we have seen Jesus traveling to meet his destiny, teaching, healing and prophesying along the way. We have seen his popularity skyrocket, people flocking to hear and see him, seeking his healing touch, cherishing his teachings. We have also witnessed the scribes and Pharisees setting traps for him. Now he is paraded before Pilate, ridiculed by Herod, sent back to Pilate, abandoned for a murderer by the people, and killed in a most painful way by the soldiers of Rome. The day was indeed dark. Few, if any, knew that the resurrection was only a few days away. It seems to be forever true that darkness is followed by light. Praise be to God.

Wendel Long

Father, into your hands we commend our spirits reciting as did Jesus the words of his book of prayer, the Hebrew Psalms on which he was nourished and was fed. We are grateful that as he walked the road to the city of his destiny we follow along the Way that will lead to the completion and glory of our own lives in him who lived and died and rose again. Amen.

February 24, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 119:49-72; p.m.: 49, 53*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 37:25-36*  
*1 Corinthians 2:1-13*  
*Mark 1:29-45*

March 27, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 137, 144; p.m.: 42, 43*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 10:21-11:8*  
*Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18*  
*Gospel: Mark 10:46-52*

*“For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within?”*

What we worship is a person, flesh and blood. We kneel before Jesus who claimed that equality with God is not a thing to be grasped. Yet he brought up into the heart of God the suffering of the broken human heart so that God being fully human could know the spirit of human beings. Can there be imagined a more compassionate Buddha than this the Incarnate One?

The Christian way of being does not necessarily supplant all other religious expressions. It subsumes them. They can find also a place in the heart of God because God knows whereof they are made and toward what they are properly oriented that is the uplift of the human spirit and the uplift of the human heart into the heart of the Holy One.

Albert+

Holy One, your son came to live among us as the Incarnate One so that you might know your beings from the suffering of the earth. We worship Christ the King who rules with you in the heavenly realms of our hearts. We give you thanks and praise for this consecration in dignity. Amen

March 26, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 22; p.m.: 141, 143*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 9:13-35*  
*Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:1-12*  
*Gospel: Mark 10:32-45*

February 25, 2010

*Psalm: am: 50, 59, 60; pm: 19, 46*  
*Old Testament: Genesis: 39:1-23*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:15*  
*Gospel: Mark 2:1-12*

*“When Jesus saw their faith he said “Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

The gospel story in Mark depicts a living drama. Jesus is in a home surrounded by people. When no one else can enter through the door, four faithful friends make an opening in the roof and lower a paralytic to the feet of Jesus.

Consider taking the role of the paralytic in this story. How would it feel to be helpless as you are carried on a mat to meet the healer? Are you full of hope but at the same time doubtful of a cure? Do you feel gratitude to your friends? Are you fearful as you are lowered through the roof?

Then you see the face of Jesus and hear the words “Your sins are forgiven.” Are you disappointed because you are not healed of your physical disability immediately? In this story the paralytic is healed, takes up his mat, and leaves for home.

The Lenten message is one of being forgiven, not through our works but through our faith. Being forgiven does not mean being healed of all physical ills. Forgiveness should, however, lead to a new way of looking at all aspects of our lives, including our attitude toward our physical limitations.

Rosalie Jensen

Source of All Being, you call us as we are, diseased, broken, limited, and flawed, and you offer us your fullness, your healing, your forgiveness, and the courage to live as we are, to be accepted and to accept. Enable our hearts to be as full of acceptance as you are of offering, through Christ, our Lord. Amen

February 26, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 40, 54; pm: 51*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 40:1-23*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 3: 16-23*  
*Gospel: Mark 2:13-22*

March 25, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 131, 132, 133; p.m.: 140, 142*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 7:25-8:19*  
*Epistle: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18*  
*Gospel: Mark 10:17-31*

*“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”*

Who are we – you and me? We are many things in our world of Dahlonega, Georgia. We are the children of our parents and parents to our children. Some of us have been blessed to be grandparents to our children’s children. Outside of our families, we are students, friends, associates, lawyers, teachers, accountants, soldiers, pilots and engineers. The list goes on and on.

The question at hand is do we know on a daily basis that we are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in us. Do we acknowledge and nurture our identity with God in our relationships with those around us?

Paul says in today’s Epistle lesson that God’s temple is holy and we are that temple. What does this profound truth say to us – to you and me? To me this carries a responsibility that is awesome. How do we behave as a holy temple, filled with God’s Spirit? This is a question to be pondered.

Carole Barker

Holy One, you created us for the glory of holiness, and yet we choose the muck of the sty. You intended of us vocations of dignity, and yet we choose labors of disgrace. Give us the joy of your intentions fulfilled in us that we may be embers consecrated and aflame in your temple of our beings. Amen

March 24, 2010

*Psalm: am: 119: 145-176; p.m. 128, 129, 130*

*Old Testament: Exodus 7:8-24*

*Epistle: 2 Corinthians 2: 14-3:6*

*Gospel: Mark 10:1-16*

February 27, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 55; p.m.: 138, 139*

*Old Testament: Genesis 41:14-45*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:1-7*

*Gospel: Mark 2:23-3:6*

*“For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing . . . . Who is sufficient for these things?”*

Aroma is a noun and is defined as a distinctive quality. If we are a distinctive quality of Christ to God, just what quality are we?

Further down in our Epistle for today Paul writes that *“we are not peddlers of God’s word like so many, but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.”*

This says to me that we are not just speakers (peddlers) of His words, but a great deal more. We are called to be the essence of God in Christ. We need to live the words. Our relationships with others need to reflect our relationship with God and this takes more than pondering. This will take effort, mindfulness and prayer.

Lent is a time for reflection and meditation. The thought for today is how we can truly become “sufficient for these things?”

Carole Barker

We know, God, that a tinker is a noun and is defined as an itinerant tinsmith, who mended household utensils. And so God, we know that we, your proper nouns, are not peddlers of so many words, but small nouns crying faith by mending the wrongs of the earth as we are able and sufficient for these things. Amen

February 28, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 24, 29; pm: 8, 84*  
*Old Testament: Genesis: 41:14-45*  
*Epistle: Romans 6:3-14*  
*Gospel: John 5:19-24*

March 23, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 121, 122, 123; p.m.: 124, 125, 126*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 5:1-6:1*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 14:20-40*  
*Gospel: Mark 9:42-50*

*Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you..."*

Pay attention! Or said another way, "Very truly I tell you..." This portion of the fourth Gospel is bracketed by this phrase and used by the writer when he wants to get our attention. Why do we need to pay attention? What is Jesus saying here that is so important? In verses 21 and 22, Jesus is claiming two prerogatives that in Rabbinical thought were exercised only by God; that of the One who judges, and that of the One who raises the dead. By making these claims, which outraged and frightened the religious and political establishment, Jesus is saying that he has the mind and power of God, that he is the Messiah.

Today Jesus is still making these claims. He is still saying that all judgment has been given to him and he is still saying that he is the life giver. We have a choice whether to believe and act on these claims. Those in power at the time acted on Jesus's claims. They crucified him!

Most of us avoid thinking about resurrection, much less about judgment; yet every Sunday when we say the Nicene Creed we say, "He will come in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end." Do you believe this? If you do, how does it affect your life? If you don't, how does it affect your life? Pay attention!

Martha Roberts

Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts that we might be judged as worthy of your presence in our lives, and we might be judged as true exemplars of your life to the world.  
Amen

March 22, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 31; p.m.: 35*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 4:10-31*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 14:1-19*  
*Gospel: Mark 9:30-41*

*“Whoever is not against us, is for us.”*

Our partisan discourse has taken this apothegm to heart, and then subverted it turning a posture of openness into one of radical opposition reducing discourse to rant. Today our political discussions are not looking for support and coalitions, and mutuality, but rather exclusion; that is to say there is no discourse. Rather each party seeks adherence to an exceedingly narrow party line, so everyone who is not in full accord and support of this line is against us, and that’s the way we want it.

During the Civil Rights Movement there were two kinds of efforts, one was confrontational (this one scared most of us) the other collaborative (and even this was defined as evil by many). Not much would have been accomplished without both of these sorts of initiatives: no one gives up power freely says Desmond Tutu. But one lasted, while the other did not (even though civil rights has been reduced from working toward eradicating group grievances to a claim for personal rights.)

The current tone is destructive based on a desire for an imposed coexistence of my way. In so being humanity is dehumanized, and dialogue, which is expansive, is vandalized.

Albert+

Holy Trinity, One God, make us know that I only am because we are; in the name of the Source of All Being, Incarnate Word, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

March 1, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 56, 57, 58; pm: 64, 65*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 41:46-57*  
*New Testament: I Corinthians 4:8-21*  
*Gospel: Mark 3:7-19a*

*“For there had been many healings that day and as a result great numbers of sick people were crowding around him, trying to touch him.”*

When my first wife told me she had an advanced stage three breast cancer, I felt depressed, concerned, and defeated. I was angry with God. If I had heard there was a man near the Sea of Galilee who cured sick people simply by touching them, I would have immediately bought the necessary tickets to go see him with my wife. Today’s gospel in Mark tells about the throng that pressed on Jesus to heal them. If my wife was ill and we had been living in that region during that time, we would have been upon Jesus. We would have been part of the problem, but my wife would have been healed. My anger with God would have disappeared. I do not take anything for granted now. I thank God for each day. The new day is a grace I do not deserve.

Lloyd Cupp

Source-of-All-Being, you intended us for joy, delight, and consecrated relationship, but all things, we know, return to the sea, and to see is a prelude of a tear; enable our hearts to rejoice in the what-is of the moment, the sheer ecstasy of it, the magnanimous surplus of the what-might-not-be. Give us the eyes and the will and the strength to love and to cherish what is before us for your apostle taught us that your grace is sufficient. Amen

March 2, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 61, 62; p.m.: 68*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 42:1-17*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8*  
*Mark: 3:19b-35*

*Psalm: 62:12 "...steadfast love belongs to you, O God. For you repay to all according to their work."*

What about, "...by grace you have been saved through faith.....not the result of works..." (Ephesians 2:8)?

Well, which is it? Why can't it be simple? Even after what I consider to be an honest effort to study and interpret these apparent contradictions, I find them understandable or explainable only through my life's experiences; that, for me, faith and works are inseparable.

In one of Fr. Albert's recent homilies, he quoted a letter written by Sir Nicholas Winton, a British stockbroker that risked everything in 1939 to save nearly 700 Czech children from the Third Reich: "There is a difference between passive goodness and active goodness, which is, in my opinion, the giving of one's time and energy in the alleviation of pain and suffering. It entails going out, finding, and helping those who are suffering and in danger, and not merely in leading an exemplary life in a purely passive way by doing no wrong."

Our works may pale in comparison to Sir Winton's, and by themselves we are not saved. But, it is my belief that, when we make an effort to show our love for each other by sharing whatever gifts we have through our offerings and our works, our faith is affirmed.

Tom Roberts

God of all goodness and of all being, your son taught us that it is seeking that we shall find; it is in effort that there is joy and appreciation, if not accomplishment. Gives us hearts of love and wills of Sir Nicholas Winton to save the children of your good earth, to work toward the establishment of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, through the worth of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah. Amen

that free will is useless against destiny.  
Under your amused glance I suffered  
like a caterpillar impaled on the spike of a blackthorn.  
The terror of the world opened itself to me.  
Could I have avoided escape into illusion?  
Into a liquor which stopped the chattering of teeth  
and melted the burning ball in my breast  
and made me think I could live like others?  
I realized I was wandering from hope to hope  
and I asked you, All Knowing, why you torture me.  
Is it a trial like Job's, so that I call faith a phantom  
and say: You are not, nor do your verdicts exist,  
and the earth is ruled by accident?  
Who can contemplate  
simultaneous, a-billion-times multiplied pain?  
It seems to me that people who cannot believe in you  
deserve your praise.  
But perhaps because you overwhelmed by pity,  
you descended to earth  
to experience the condition of mortal creatures.  
I pray to you, for I do not know how not to pray.  
Because my heart desires you,  
though I do not believe you would cure me.

And so it must be, that those who suffer will continue to suffer,  
praising your name.

Czeslaw Milosz

March 21, 2010  
*Psalm: am: 118; pm: 145*  
*Old Testament: Exodus 3:16-4:12*  
*New Testament: Romans 12:1-12*  
*Gospel: John 8:46-59*

*“Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear is that you are not from God.”*

The sound of the multitude is deafening: voices rise and fall; footsteps thunder in our bones. How can we hear when we are caught up in the sound of living?

Perhaps, the reason for attending church is to give us down time. While in church, I have heard many testimonies of salvation. The ones that break my heart the most are told out of hopelessness and despair. The testimonies were usually told by drug addicts who had found themselves lying in their own secretions, having hit bottom. At that point all sounds are silenced. The mind has no more to say when the soul is dying. In the silence, the soul cries out for life. Finally, the person can hear the words of God, whose angels have always been there, sending their love and waiting. ... Rise up my child for you are loved.

There are many that slip away.

Shelia Noah

**I offer you a Psalm:**

*“An Alcoholic Enters the Gates of Heaven”*

What kind of man I was to be you’ve known since the beginning, since the beginning of every creature.

It must be horrible to be aware, simultaneously, of what is, what was and what will be.

I began my life confident and happy, certain that the Sun rose every day for me and that flowers opened for me every morning. I ran all day in an enchanted garden.

Not suspecting that you had picked me from the Book of Genes for another experiment altogether. As if there were not proof enough

March 3, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 72; p.m.: 119:73-96*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 42-18-28*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 5:6-6:8*  
*New Testament: Mark 4:1-20*

*“...he got into a boat on the sea and sat there.....He began to teach them many things in parables....”*

Often I want to know the page number, the perfect recipe, the definite answer. Often I claim my way of understanding is the right way; my way of being is the intended way of being. Yet the one in whose name I claim this, the author of the Way, the Word made flesh, teaches through the complex ambiguity of parables. To live authentically is to make moral, ethical choices, not to find the recipe or the page number. Our lives best lived are narratives, not lists, like gospels not catechisms. Ambiguities of our lives and decisions correspond to the densities of the gifts of our lives. Luther said, sin boldly. There is being with courage, or being in fear. Jesus said unambiguously, Love conquers fear.

Albert+

Holy One, we know the rain falls on the just and unjust alike, yet we are called by you to live among the just like Noah afloat on the sea of chaos and ambiguity navigating our way guided by the winds and the wiles. Teach us the joy and delight that Jesus taught, to live in the parable of being in the wonder of not knowing, in the grace of the rain and the sun, caring like you for the just and the unjust alike that all might strike land on the mount of your holy presence. Amen

March 4, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 70, 71; p.m.: 74*

*Old Testament: Genesis 42:29-38*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-30*

*New Testament: Mark 4:21-39*

*“He did not speak to them without a parable.”*

I love stories! There are at least three good stories in today’s gospel – placing a light on a stand rather than under a bush, tending grain faithfully for harvest, and sowing the tiny mustard seed. Also, I believe that all stories contain truth, even if they are written only to entertain.

A parable is the most obvious kind of story that reveals truth. It presents the ordinary, the real, and the earthly to illustrate a deeper meaning – a meaning which the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says is spiritual, heavenly, or miraculous. Jesus used parables for this purpose, specifically describing for us what the kingdom of God is like. Sometimes people discount Jesus’ parables, saying, “Well, you know, the people, the places, and the events in the story aren’t real. Those elements are there only because we can’t understand God’s meaning any other way.” Let me assert, however, that those elements are precisely why the story itself is true – the ordinary, the real, and the earthly are miraculous in themselves. That very real, earthly, tiniest mustard seed manifests itself in a mighty bush, where even the birds of the air can nest.

Our very lives are parables – in both joyous moments and moments that are difficult, sad, and complicated. Parables don’t just inform us. *We* ourselves are the parables – ordinary, real, and earthly folks representing the spiritual, heavenly, and miraculous. We are our Father’s love – when we softly kiss someone we love; when we anxiously wait with a surgeon’s report; when we share our food, our clothing, and our money – whenever and wherever we live our lives – teaching, praying, giving, loving, and even struggling. It is not a simple thing to be a parable – heavenly and miraculous. But when we immerse ourselves in the Sacred, we become “the greatest of all shrubs, putting forth large branches.” We become literally transformed (and also transformers) when we stop striving to *believe* Christian truths, and begin to *live* them. Frederick Buechner tells us:

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. . . .In the boredom and pain of it no less than the excitement and gladness; touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis, all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

Sharon McWhorter

In the very large but finity (sic) of being we are set in the fathomless mystery a-sea, the indelible, but miss-able dot of our existence, as indelible, as miss-able, as his resurrection, given to interpret all being, the very little me in the midst of it. Wonder...the tale (sic) that wags the dog. Amen

March 20, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 102, 108; p.m.: 33*

*Old Testament: Exodus 2:23-3:15*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

*Gospel: Mark 9:14-29*

March 19, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 107:1-32; p.m.: 107:33-43*

*Old Testament: Exodus 2:1-22*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3*

*Gospel: Mark 9:2-13*

March 5, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 69; p.m.: 73*

*Old Testament: Genesis 43:1-15*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7:1-9*

*New Testament: Mark 4:35-41*

*“Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him?”*

*Who is this?* The disciples’ question strikes true. We know the situation – a storm of fierce winds and savage waves blew up suddenly on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples were terrified they were going to die. When they called, Jesus answered, and the sea was stilled. It is the disciples’ question that I want to ponder here, however, for it has become for me a central question. It was also Mark’s question, I believe, throughout his gospel. And the question indicates a change of focus – from fear of the storm to fear of the Christ – a very special kind of fear, however. In fact, the RSV uses the word “awe,” and I even like *The Message* translation, “They were in absolute awe, staggered.”

*Who is this?* How do we explain the earthquake in Haiti, the devastation of the 2009 floods, the shootings at Ft. Hood, the grief of a widow, the loss of a child, the poverty and starvation of children?

*Who is this?* What about gorgeous reds on the mountains of Dahlenega at sunset, soft blues and blacks of a summer night sky, a mother brushing her cheek against her baby’s soft hair, clasped hands of a couple walking together, a young child splashing in “puddle-liscious” water, a phone call from a loved one in Iraq or Afghanistan?

*Who is this?* How do we look at the crucifixion – Jesus on the cross, humiliated and shamed? Do we rush to resurrection, bypassing the suffering Christ?

C. S. Lewis wrote in *A Grief Observed*, “My own idea of God. . .has to be shattered time after time. [God] shatters it.” And that is unsettling for us, even scary, just as the disciples (and we) become frightened or don’t understand. Life’s events continually challenge us with *Who is this?*

A glimmer of understanding tells me that this enigma who is Jesus calls us to relationships – relationships that are more mysterious than we can explain, rich with possibility and promise, baffling and surprising. We don't have to prove our points or take control. And even though we won't get all the answers we want, we can rejoice in the possibilities that His presence offers us, awe-filled opportunities.

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre wrote, "It takes you by surprise/It comes in odd packages/It sometimes looks like loss/Or mistakes." She is describing Grace, and I know this is who He is. I am staggered by it.

– Sharon McWhorter

God, teach me to pray not to my own idea of God so petty, so puny, so exclusively not you, but to you the staggering awe of being, the She who is, and in whom I exist and have my being. I know that in my own idea of you, of God, there is no pain, yet I pray before your cross in anticipation of the Week of the Passion of your son; I pray knowing the ironic freedom of love, of departure. Teach me to know that the earth is the Holy One's and the fullness thereof, the sea and they that dwell therein. All things come by you, and I am staggered by it, by you, and say only, I live in gratitude that I, that might not be, am. Amen

March 18, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 69; p.m.: 73*

*Old Testament: Exodus 1:6-22*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26*

*Gospel: Mark 8:27-9:1*

March 17, 2010  
*Psalms: am: 101, 109; pm: 119: 121-144*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 50:15-26*  
*New Testament: I Corinthians 12:1-11*  
*Gospel: Mark 8:11-26*

March 6, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 75, 76; p.m.:23, 27*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 43:16-34*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7:10-24*  
*Gospel: Mark 5:1-20*

*“Get away from me, Satan, for you are not taking God’s  
viewpoint, but men’s.”*

It was a Monday more than two decades ago. I was a student teacher trying to teach mathematics to students who did not care about the content. My supervising professor showed up on an unannounced observation. I was nervous and wary. Little did I know that several of the students had brought issues from the weekend into the classroom. Half way through the lesson, two girls got up crying and fled the room. My supervising teacher went after them. I was blind sided and reeling. After the ‘lesson’, my supervising professor and supervising teacher and I had a talk. My professor yelled at me and called the lesson a disaster. She told me she would be back the next week at the same time, and same class, and wanted to see improvement. Today’s gospel reading tells about Jesus’ public rebuke of Peter. Peter must have been in pain about being rebuked in public by someone he respected and loved. Jesus was trying to teach Peter just as my supervising professor was trying to teach me. I never let another student bolt from the classroom again without going after him to get control of the classroom.

Lloyd Cupp

Holy One, *The sublime always begins with the chord, “and then I saw...”*. Like Peter we are so often blind to the sublime that is marbled through the human, like the Incarnate Word. Though you chastise weak eyes, weak I’s, we know you to be as well patient with our flesh, staggering us finally with the sublime as finally it becomes apparent to us. You know the chords of human suffering, and created the theorems that govern the calculi of our relationships, and the limits of the functions of our trigonometry. May we ever approach one another and you in the ever-nearing parabolas of our relationships. Amen

March 7, 2010

*Psalm: am: 93, 96; pm: 34*

*Old Testament: Genesis 44:1-17*

*New Testament: Romans 8: 1-10*

*Gospel: John 5:25-29*

*“... the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”*

Whoa, God doesn't leave any room for excuses. If you don't heed the call when that spark of light is quickened, you will lose that spark – for what is of God returns to God.

If we do not answer, are we then the 'walking dead'?

Shelia Noah

Whoa, God, your voice is the whisper I do not always hear because of the deafening thunder of it. Whoa, God, stand with me that I might hear your voice and then heed your call to live alive in this hour that now is. Amen

March 16, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 97, 99, 100; p.m.: 94,95*

*Old Testament: Genesis 49:29-50:14*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34*

*Gospel: Mark 8:1-10*

March 15, 2010  
*Psalm: a.m.: 89:1-18; p.m.: 89:19-52*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 49:1-28*  
*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1*  
*Gospel: Mark 7:24-37*

March 8, 2010  
*Psalm a.m.: 80; p.m.: 77, 79*  
*Old Testament: Genesis 44:18-34*  
*Epistle: I Corinthians 7:25-31*  
*Gospel: Mark 5:21-43*

*“Your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”*

Afflictions come in many forms. There are those that come in the form of illness, tribulations, trial and hurts from the past, some of these which have become relevant to me throughout my life, and all too familiar to me. And these afflictions can take its toll on the soul and one's faith.

The woman in this parable was healed because of her faith. As a child and being abused I can recall that all I had was my faith that somehow God would come and either take me home or that he would somehow save me, this was my conversation with him after all the people would leave the church.

As an adult my faith failed and all that remained was my hope. This somehow left me feeling incomplete and tormented because of losing my faith, I no longer felt like God could hear me. It was not until the day that a Doctor gave me some news regarding my health, which brought my faith back. I walked into a cathedral and fell on my knees in tears and said “Lord please help me I have yet to live, show me what I must do.” About a week later my life forever changed, my past afflictions had been healed, my outlook on life changed, I became sober, and here I am today with restored health, and a will to live. God granted me peace and healing from all of my afflictions. Hope is powerful, but Faith is much stronger, and I know that he heard me even when I did not believe, and just like the woman in the parable I too was trembling, but God showed mercy and love. Never lose your faith.

Robert Goleman

My faith looks up to thee, thou lamb of Calvary whose words from the cross were recited from the psalm, My God, my God why have you forsaken me. But even in the cross as even at the grave we make our song, Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. We glory in the truth that your faithfulness toward your people is free from our faithfulness to your way. In this we say, thank you, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Amen

March 9, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 78:1-39; p.m.: 78:40-72*

*Old Testament: Genesis 45:1-15*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7:32-40*

*New Testament: Mark 6:1-13*

March 14, 2010

*Psalm: am: 66, 67; pm: 19, 46*

*Old Testament: Genesis 48: 8-22*

*New Testament: Romans 8:11-25*

*Gospel: John 6:27-40*

*“What must we do to perform the works of God?”*

*“This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”*

*“If you believe in Me, you will keep my commandments: First: Love God; Second: Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

For most of us that sounds easy enough. I like a reclusive life. I don't have to talk when I don't feel like it. I don't have to get along with my neighbors if I don't have contact with them. I can spend all day doing what I please. Sounds like heaven to me!

Then, I asked myself. How can I correct my spirit if I am still? How would I know where I need correction if I am not challenged? How would I learn control? How would I learn to love? How would I receive blessings from God if I give nothing? Did my heaven just turn to hell?

Holy Spirit teach me, use me, love through me.

Shelia Noah

**I offer this Psalm:**

Would it be better to sit in silence?

To think everything, to feel everything, to say nothing?

This is the way of the gourd.

This is the way of the rock in the river, over which the water pours  
all night and all day.

But the nature of man is not the nature of silence.

Words are thunders of the mind.

Words are refinements of the flesh.

Words are the responses to the thousand curvaceous moments –  
we just mange it –

sweet and electric, words flow from the brain  
and out the gate of the mouth.

We make books of them, out of hesitations and grammar.

We are slow, and choosy.

This is the world.

Mary Oliver

March 13, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 87, 90; p.m.: 136*

*Old Testament: Genesis 47:27-48:7*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13*

*New Testament: Mark 7:1-23*

March 10, 2009

*Psalm: a.m.: 119:97-120; p.m.: 81, 82*

*Old Testament: Genesis 45:16-28*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13*

*Gospel: Mark 6:13-29*

March 11, 2009

*Psalm: a.m.: 42, 43; p.m.: 85, 86*

*Old Testament: Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:1-15*

*Gospel: Mark 6:30-46*

March 12, 2010

*Psalm: a.m.: 88; p.m.: 91, 92*

*Old Testament: Genesis 47:1-26*

*Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:16-27*

*Gospel: Mark 6:47-56*