

Jan 17

Peace Like a River

We sang "Peace like a river" but we sang it slowly, not at the speed and with the gestures I used when singing with the kids. Slowly enough to think about how peace and love are still my tent under which I commune with God. Still the place where my hopes meet my ache. Still the place I thought was going to be our meeting ground, that space beyond right and wrong that Rumi talked about. Disappointment surges through me every time I read the news, where City of Peace is the name of the place where kings walked and prophets howled, where the stones are seeped in blood and ground down by donkey feet and car wheels. It isn't too late, is it, I tell myself, but I don't know if I will see the turn in my lifetime and you can't imagine how much I yearn for it. How much my heart thinks it is impossible to learn of one more death, one more child under collapsed rubble, one more journalist killed while delivering the news. One more universe snuffed out. And yet I got up this morning with the satisfaction of coffee and the gratitude that I had heat and hot water, and a puzzle waiting on the coffeetable and books by my bedside, and a view out the window to the clear cold day and the sky turning blue as if there is nothing else to do but rejoice in being alive.

Feb 14

Ashes on My Forehead

The candles on the altar in the center flicker
and voices are low and deep as we sing together.
I am thinking of penitence, and forgiveness,

and how Lent is the way we enter spring,
a time to dream which seeds you want to plant and
what weeds you will need to remove. Preparing the soil

with hoe and harrow, praying for rain, praying
for rabbits and plant-eater bugs to stay away.
Lencten is the origin of the word Lent, meaning lengthen,

meaning the days are lengthening toward spring,
and the ashes on our foreheads mean remember
that from dust we came and to dust we return.

How to hold both at the same time:
the lengthening toward spring, rebirth, renewal,
the miracle of resurrection,

and the shortening of our days,
headed toward that final threshold
when our bodies return to the earth.

Can we tap into knowing
that we are held in the arms of the Holy
always, even when it is hard to believe?

How do we burn with love of God and love of
Creation, including the stranger outside the door
of this sanctuary where we sing and pray and reflect,

until we are ash? Until we are ash.

March 20

We do not journey alone

Do this, he said, in remembrance of me,
take this cup and remember that you are
sons and daughters of God, and so
are your brothers and sisters.
Take this bread and remember you
are hungry for justice.

He said take up your cross
and he meant accompany me in
pointing out the harms even if it means
you will be killed for it. He said give away
all you think you own and follow me.

He said stand up and walk, your faith
has healed you. He gave us a map to the
center of our own luminous Divinity, he
said greater things than these you will do.

There were outcasts at his table,
women who made his meals and
sat by his feet, disciples who would
eventually know what he was talking about.

And there is me, pilgrim and seeker,
looking around to see
who might be beside me.

He is in my hands sharing bread,
whether at my table or the tables of
the poor. He is in my feet
when I walk into and out of a prison
with a pile of poetry handouts.

He is in my thoughts
when I pray, and even when I doubt
my prayers are heard.

He is in my heart with its
determination to be a healing

presence and to bless the
sorrows and the joys.

He is my soul opening to the world
that is under an indictment of greed
and abuse, yet I still offer deep
attention and simple acts of kindness.

He is my poem exulting in the good.
He is in my breath, a rhythm of Inhalation
and Exhalation with the One.

He is in my final days and my golden years
and the company I keep as I wind
my way home.

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