



Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • March 27, 2022
The Fourth Sunday of Lent



THE SCRIPTURE
Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

THE MESSAGE
“Sacred Rhythms: Encountering God in Scripture”
Terry Overfelt

We continue our 40-day Lenten Journey and find ourselves just a few days over halfway through. Weekly, we have been inspired by Ruth Haley Barton’s Book, *Sacred Rhythms*.

We have seen the strength of her practices as she says, *“The choice to establish your own sacred rhythms is the most important choice you can make in your life.”*

Our natural tendency is to push, work longer, and strive. Barton invites us to listen to an inner pulse that can be heard only when we are quiet. To hear the call to know our lives need not be harried or harbor fruitless exhaustion. And she asks us to pause today for the sacred rhythm that is found in the Scriptures. (*Introduction, Sacred Rhythms*)

Sacred rhythm has a downbeat of mystery. The anointed, inspired, and sacred words carry a transformative power that has been experienced by billions of people over thousands of years. The Bible is our sacred text. It has been- written, translated, interpreted, shielded, wielded, understood, and misunderstood...used for proof, information, certainty of our own faith or defending it to others.

Do we read it for information or transformation? Ken Gire writes in *Windows of the Soul*, *“Scriptures revealed a person who is searching for me, reaching out to me. A person who wanted not simply a personal relationship with me but an intimate one. Now when I read the Scriptures, I read searching.”* (p. 190)

Searching to know the one who creates this mystery. Jesus said, *“Those who love me will be loved by God, and I too, will love them and show myself to them.”*-John 14:21

All is the mystery of humankind’s quest to *know* and to be known. God and Christ in us, recognizes the Holy Spirit moving in and through our stories from Creation to Revelation and beyond! It is an amazing story, it is our story, and it has been handed to us for inspiration in every day of our living it out. The days that came before us, and those that will follow our dear departing. As Mary Jane told me on Friday, *“The story goes really fast.”*

How have you heard the story? Have you heard it as a textbook or a love letter? Maybe both?

A month ago, at the women's retreat, Our Muslim sister Ibtisam Barakat opened her first presentation drawing us together in our shared story. *"Remember sisters, remember our home in the garden? Remember Mom and Dad? Remember our pet snake?"*

In her opening exposition, the mystery and beauty of our united Judeo/Christian/Muslim beginnings had us sigh and laugh over our in-commonness as descendants of Eve, Adam, and Abraham.

Sacred Scripture is more than the memorable stories. It's a word to live by. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love."

In asking some this week about their favorite passages or messages in the Word, some knew the chapter and verse: Exodus 23:20: *"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared for you."*

Another immediately knew the idea... *everlasting love*, and we could look it up and find 56 verbatim mentions and 1,256 mentions in some form. Still another would say, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made!"* – Psalm 139

Last weekend, the Youth went on a mission trip overnight. At dusk, John asked the kids to think of the burdens they are carrying. He asked them to imagine giving them up to God, who would hold with and for them. Psalm 55:22, *"Turn your burdens over to the Lord, and God will take care of you."*



Then John lit a flaming sky lantern and sent it up over the lake while he silently prayed it would get enough altitude to clear the tree line on the opposite side. It soared until it disappeared into a speck of light. And we all say together... Amen.



Here's what John said about the weekend. It was "to a kid" a sense of **encounter** with God and community.

Amen, Amen!

Maybe you are thinking of a meaningful Scripture message now that led you to an encounter.

A Sacred Encounter is beyond what we can do as humans. It is God's transforming power and mystery. We know mystery. Your mother's body was the vessel for something unseen that only God with nature can do. Even though we have amazing embryo pictures of how you were formed in your mother's womb, it was not human action, it is months of her waiting while divine power was at work. Wait for it! More than those who watch for the morning. A child being born, and soul breathed into a tiny body... is a miracle.

It is spring! Look at the chrysalis the caterpillar spins itself into as it yields to the mystery and miracle that take place without any participation on its part other than instinct and gradual emergence as something miraculously new. Wait for it! More than those who watch for the morning. A butterfly taking flight is a resurrection miracle.

Lent is a process of metamorphosis; a giving up and an offering up. As with the caterpillar, it is opening us up to receive the gifts that come from the sacred rhythm of encountering God in the chrysalis of Scripture.

Sister Joyce Rupp, wrote, *The Cup of Our Life*. Eighty of us are using this Lenten guide from the Women's Retreat. Weekly we consider a theme that uses a cup (we chose the blue mug) as the metaphor for our spiritual journey. The daily practice includes a simple breath prayer, a reflection that associates with the metaphor of THE CUP, a Scripture, and prayerful application. Together we have picked up a sacred rhythm! It takes just a few minutes a day and is powerfully transformative, not only personally, but in communion with the other women who are joining hearts in this thought and practice. Last week, Mark spoke to us about the power of being in relationship with one another.

One of the devotions last week was about *a clean heart* and a grimy cup with a washing that feels to me, like forgiveness. The Scripture was Psalm 51, which is King David's renown confession and penitential song, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me."

David made some terrible choices but *knowing* himself forgiven enabled him to live into the redeeming plans God still had for him, although not without some peril and grief. From David's royal lineage comes the Christ in Jesus.

The power of forgiveness is what is being spoken in today's psalm. The guilt of sin and shame can be paralyzing, even deadly. God knows this, and this is why the psalm

sings of forgiveness being what God is known for! Stand up! Twice, our waiting is likened to “*waiting more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.*”

Those watching for the morning, know that the dawn will come. They know that theirs is to keep a keen eye out for the dark night, and any trouble heading in. Morning guards are exhausted, but they endure their shift dutifully, waiting for the assured ending with the sunrise.

We have had and are still in a season of crying out from the depths. COVID has been hard on us. Every single day, someone speaks of the aftermath. Some of us are still suffering from emotional or physical fatigue like never before: Threat fatigue, Compassion Fatigue, Caution Fatigue, Objection to everything fatigue, figuring things out fatigue, Protest and Offense fatigue, figuring a different way to do things... FATIGUE! Barton even names Christian Fatigue Syndrome.

We have had so many new requirements on our imaginations. We have entered a dimension that calls us to hear, see and think differently...feels a lot like...

[Click [HERE](#) to view the video, or copy this link: The aftermath
<https://youtu.be/ORbseYAkzRM>]

The *Twilight Zone* opening credits HD 32 seconds.

As we are emerging from the Pandemic, we are changed. Do, do, do, do! We found out we can stay home! We have a need for God and the mystery of loving power like never before. We have a need for forgiveness for the things we have not done well or at all. We need to know that forgiveness will liberate us to God's good intentions for us, like King David's.

We hear the Good News is that God's love is steadfast. God is reaching, calling, and redeeming us from all, ALL, our iniquities or injustices and impurities.

We call that transformation, redemption, or restoration or making someone new.

Forgiveness only happens with a mystery beyond ourselves, and it is a power we can count on to happen and we WILL wait. Wait for it! More than those who watch for the morning. In the first and third stanzas of Psalm 130, the composer is speaking or singing in first person:

*I cry,
hear my voice,*

*my supplications,
I wait,
I hope,
my soul.*

Hayley-Barton would say this is sort of the opposite of Samuel's being woken in the night by the voice of God and responding, "*Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.*" – 1 Samuel 3:10

We find ourselves, in our loud, crowded, busy and breaking point lives crying out...Barton says, "*Listen God, for your servant is speaking.*"

Homework for you today, is to leave here saying, Psalm 130, and go and spend more time with it (do a Lexio Divina, re-read it three or four times) to notice that the third and fourth stanzas speak beyond the psalmist's personal petition, to children of God, O Israel, hope for the community. It's not only about you. What is this saying about the overarching power of global forgiveness?

Mid-winter, I was feeling overwhelmed. COVID had distanced so many of us in the church. I didn't know how to even begin to pick up all that seemed lost. No day ever brought enough effort because there was so much more we could be figuring out. Maybe you have felt the same exhaustion and discouragement.

Like the psalmist in his or her depth of crying, I brought this lament to God in the quiet centering prayer. When in Jesus' embrace, I started to compare his presence with a metaphor of a butterf ...and I stopped myself. I apologized to Jesus. "I am so sorry I



always make a metaphor of you; you need not be compared to anything else. You are so lovely just as you are." Jesus looked at me and spread a deck of cards out on the imagined table between us. I had to laugh. I said, "Oh, I'm apologizing for making a metaphor. and now you are making one?"

Jesus picked up just one of the playing cards. You might be the first one to name which one it was. It was the three of hearts. To me it meant, just reach to one with the love of the trinity...Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Then he gestured to the entire deck and seemed to say, "per week" One per week, 52 cards, 52 weeks. It had never occurred to me that the same number of weeks in a year was that of cards in a deck. Jesus is clever.

Since that Encounter, at least once a week, I reach beyond what I need to get done and listen for one other heart. It still won't be enough. But this gesture, given me by Christ, has taken so much of the ANXIETY OF INADEQUACY away.

And here's the Scripture we will speak in sacred rhythm:

From 2 Philippians 4:6: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God."*

And we say... Amen.

SONG OF FOCUS
"God's Letter of Love"
Words and Music: Ed Varnum

Refrain:

We read and listen, and seeking, we pray.
The Spirit within welcomes Spirit above.
And these ancient words are living this day
from God's letter of love.

1. And though our lives may be shaken,
the pillars we trusted may shift from their place,
our foundation, our peace is God's presence
in the beauty and love of God's grace.

Refrain:

We read and listen, and seeking, we pray.
The Spirit within welcomes Spirit above.
And these ancient words are living this day
from God's letter of love.

2. Oh, to grasp the width and the length,
the height and the depth of God's wondrous love,
in the love of Christ that's beyond all knowledge
and be filled with the fullness of God!

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH