

Morning Prayer – Saturday, May 30, 2020

*Celtic Daily Prayer – The Northumbria Community *modifications made for inclusive language.*

Opening Words (*as candle is lit*)

O God, you are my God, eagerly I seek you.

As a new day begins

breathe your peace into my soul, and

call out in me again a willingness to love and serve.

Psalm 4 – St. Helena Psalter

Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause; *

you set me free when I am hard-pressed;

have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory; *

how long will you worship dumb idols

and run after false gods?”

Know that God does wonders for the faithful; *

when I call, God will hear me.

Tremble, then, and do not sin; *

speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.

Offer the appointed sacrifices *

and put your trust in the Most High.

Many are saying,

“Oh, that we might see better times!” *

Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O God.

You have put gladness in my heart, *

more than when grain and wine and oil increase.

I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep; *

for only you, God, make me dwell in safety.

(A moment of silence to reflect on the reading)

Canticle

In peace and in truth I put on Christ this day;

I will walk with Christ and Christ will walk with me.

Whatever joys or sorrows the day may bring

Christ will bear all things with me.

Whatever joys or sorrows the day may bring

Christ will guide me through

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we

make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

(A moment of silence to reflect on the reading)

Poem – “What’s Written On the Body” by Peter Pereira

He will not light long enough
for the interpreter to gather
the tatters of his speech.
But the longer we listen
the calmer he becomes.
He shows me the place where his daughter
has rubbed with a coin, violaceous streaks
raising a skeletal pattern on his chest.
He thinks he’s been bit by the wind.
He’s worried it will become pneumonia.
In Cambodia, he’d be given
a special tea, a prescriptive sacrifice,
the right chants to say. But I
know nothing of Chi, of Karma,
and ask him to lift the back of his shirt,
so I may listen to his breathing.
Holding the stethoscope’s bell I’m stunned
by the whirl of icons and script
tattooed across his back, their teal green color
the outline of a map which looks
like Cambodia, perhaps his village, a lake,
then a scroll of letters in a watery signature.
I ask the interpreter what it means.
It’s a spell, asking his ancestors
to protect him from evil spirits—
she is tracing the lines with her fingers—
and those who meet him for kindness.
The old man waves his arms and a staccato
of diphthongs and nasals fills the room.
He believes these words will lead his spirit
back to Cambodia after he dies.
I see, I say, and rest my hand on his shoulder.
He takes full deep breaths and I listen,
touching down with the stethoscope
from his back to his front. He watches me
with anticipation—as if awaiting a verdict.
His lungs are clear. *You’ll be fine,*
I tell him. *It’s not your time to die.*
His shoulders relax and he folds his hands
above his head as if in blessing.
Ar-kon, he says. All better now.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS, THE WORLD, AND ONESELF

Closing Prayer

(after which candle is extinguished)

We stretch out our hand and throw,
and many, many seeds we sow.
In truth we do not know
where they will go,
which will take root
or when the unlikeliest ground
will return glimpses of gold.

Sowing at times in tears,
persisting through the years,
blessed again and again
by your harvest of love.
Let us embody your ready kindness
this day
for things will not be
as they were before.
But whatever may be
May we walk in your way of love.

Spiritual Exercises:

- 1) How does your body tell the story of your life?
- 2) Make a mask that represents the parts of yourself you hide from the world. Then remember that God loves and blesses all of you, even the parts you might wish to hide.

Sources

Prayers and Buechner reading are from: *Celtic Daily Prayer: Book Two, Farther Up and Farther In* Northumbria Community, London: William Collins Books, 2015.

Poem: Peter Pereira, "What's Written on the Body" from *What's Written on the Body* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007)