



EMILY
DICKINSON
and the
POETRY
OF LENT



A LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL



INTRODUCTION

We call these weeks “Lent” because of the “lengthening” days, the growing light that, in time, will coax the buds to swell, the ferns to unfurl, and the flowers to open up in bloom. Emily Dickinson was an avid gardener and student of the botanical world, a perfect docent for this season of awakening. As the cross and the empty tomb approach, the church prepares with forty days of fasting and reflection, clearing and cultivation, all for the sake of more fully celebrating the spring’s Easter garden when it comes.

And so if Lent is about lengthening light, it’s also about broadening our hearts and opening our eyes – and poetry can help. In a letter to a friend, Emily Dickinson defined poetry this way: “If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.” As we approach the holiest week of the Christian year, with its bitter cold, its angelic fire, its shadows of death and its blooms of new life, poetry can deepen and heighten our sense of the season.

In this Lenten devotional, the words of scripture and the poetry of Emily Dickinson will be our guides. Each week, biblical texts and Dickinson’s poems throw light on each other, pointing toward simple, powerful practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends, or in concert with your congregation.

So grab your favorite Bible and a collection of Dickinson’s poetry (all the poems may also be found online). Week by week, we’ll travel this Lenten journey together toward Easter morning – and thereby do our part, in a world so full of shadows, to help lengthen the light, warm our hearts, and tip the tops of our heads to the joy of God’s springtime resurrection.

A decorative border in blue ink surrounds the central text. It features stylized flowers and leaves. At the top and bottom are larger, more complex floral motifs with multiple buds. The sides are decorated with vertical stems bearing rounded, leaf-like shapes.

TIPS FOR READING DICKINSON'S POETRY

1. **TAKE HEART!** Dickinson is a fascinating, rewarding poet, and her style can be quite compact and sometimes enigmatic. If you don't understand something at first, don't worry. Think of her poems as little cut gems, or small bites of delicious, rich food. Go slow, savor, and let the light come!
2. **THANK GOD FOR DICTIONARIES:** Dickinson wrote in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and she also had a taste for quirky terms, so her vocabulary can be unfamiliar at first. Don't be afraid to look up words as you go!
3. **TRY READING OUT LOUD:** Sometimes, the simple act of reading aloud can unlock the inner emotions or meaning of a poem. And all – those – dashes? Think of them as tiny dramatic pauses, or as signals to sharpen the notes of the music.
4. **RINSE AND REPEAT:** And speaking of music, think of a Dickinson poem as a song, or a miniature symphony, meant to be listened to again and again. Like many poets, she writes in a way that opens each poem to many possible meanings – and no reader is supposed to get them all at once! So take your time, and come back often. Each poem is a continual invitation to visit and revisit, always with the possibility of discovering something new.



ASH WEDNESDAY


READ

Scripture:

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Poems:

"There's a certain Slant of light"
and "A Light exists in Spring,"
by Emily Dickinson



For where
your treasure is,
there your heart
will be also.
+ Matthew 6:21

MEDITATE

As Ash Wednesday reminds us of our mortality, this is a day for taking stock. In this passage from Matthew, Jesus challenges us to reflect on our motives and priorities – and beginning Lent with this passage frames the season as an opportunity for this reflection. As we pray, give, refrain, or consume – in other words, as we live our lives – what's really driving us? Are we trying to impress others, storing up "treasures on earth," in effect putting our hearts in the wrong place?

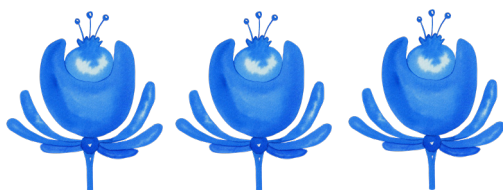
These two poems from Dickinson reflect on the light at this time of year. On one hand, the slanted light of winter afternoons, evocative of heaviness, despair, and affliction (even affliction caused by religion); and on the other hand, the light of early spring, evocative of hope, new life, and sacrament (a sacrament is "a visible sign of invisible grace"). Thus Dickinson imagines this time of year in emotional, theological terms, and so as a special, if fleeting, time for stepping back and reorienting our lives. As we look out onto the world, what heaviness, what afflictions do we feel? What hope and beauty? What sacrament, what grace?

MORE LIGHT

Pair these meditations on light with Dickinson's "Before I got my eye put out," a poem in which she imagines losing her eyesight, then gaining it again – and consequently being overwhelmed by the beauty of the world, so much so that she contemplates wanting to remain blind. On Ash Wednesday, this poem can serve as an exploration of the ways we fail to notice the radiant loveliness of creation. Accordingly, the 40 days of Lent may be conceived as a journey toward rincreasing our awareness of God's gifts all around us.

PRACTICES:

- + For the rest of this week begin each day by lighting a candle of reflection, praying, "God of light and life, help me to put first things first today. Help me notice the things that are weighing me down, so I can relinquish them; and give me eyes to see signs of your grace, so I can embrace them. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Make a special effort to notice the light in the world this week (or all Lent long); try keeping a "light journal" as a tool for reflection. Which window(s) does the light come in over the course of the day? What emotions does the light outside evoke? Let these reflections lead to others: What goals do you have for this Lenten season? How would you like to reorder your motives and priorities as you pray, give, refrain, and consume?
- + Among other things, Ash Wednesday is about remembering our mortality. Try writing a simple obituary for your life. What would you like to be remembered for? Share and discuss what you write with family or friends, over a meal or online.
- + "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Take a fresh look at where your treasure is: how are you spending your money and time? What small but meaningful steps can you take to bring your spending and giving more into line with your values?



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



READ

Scripture:

Mark 1:9-15

Poem

"A little Madness in the Spring,"

by Emily Dickinson

The time is
fulfilled, and the
kingdom of God has
come near; repent,
and believe in the
good news.

+ Mark 1:15

MEDITATE

The baptism-in-the-wilderness by John was about repentance, and Jesus' preaching was, too. In Mark's original Greek, the word for repentance is *metanoia*, from *meta* ("change") and *noia* ("mind") – today we might say, "change of heart," or "change of life." Dickinson suggests that some "wholesome madness" is fitting for this time of year: a fresh start, a new beginning, a wild, lush springtime of the soul.

But just as the spring brings new growth in a forest or in a backyard garden, the new life in our lives is not "our own," but rather a gift from God, the movement of the Spirit in our lives. With this in mind, we can ask: What "change of heart" is God already stirring within us? What new growth, what new leaf, what new flower is the Spirit calling us to cultivate?

MORE LIGHT

For a beautiful meditation on the dignity and "responsibility" of a flower (Dickinson was a passionate gardener), see Dickinson's "Bloom – is Result – to meet a Flower."

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of repentance, praying, "God of mercy, show me the ways you are changing my life, the new growth, the new flowers you have in mind for me, and for your wider world, 'this whole Experiment of Green.' In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Schedule a "wilderness walk" in solitude or with a family member, listening for how God may be calling you to change and grow.
- + Do something "a little mad" this week, for the sake of delight: explore a brand new place; eat breakfast for dinner; read your favorite children's books to each other; fast from housework entirely (entirely!) for a full day; have a snowball fight; put a bunch of quarters in parking meters downtown; schedule a day-long board game marathon with your family; do a Zoom call with friends consisting entirely in joke telling – the "madder" the better!
- + Research or reach out online to an organization changing the world in inspiring ways: a racial justice and reconciliation organization; an environmental advocacy organization; a local community garden – follow your passions! Learn more about their work, their impact, and how you can get involved.
- + Dickinson loved letter-writing – so write a letter to yourself this week. What changes are you making (or would you like to make) to be more in tune with God's good news? Discuss this question with family or friends over a meal or online. And then, like a mad monarch, address the letter to yourself - and put it in the mail!



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

READ

Scripture:

Mark 8:27-38

Poem:

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?"

by Emily Dickinson

MEDITATE

This passage in Mark is full of paradox, including Jesus' idea that salvation somehow involves letting go of "wanting to save one's life," and instead, being willing to "lose" it. Dickinson's playful poem suggests one way to understand this mystery: the attempt to save ourselves, to be "Somebody" in the world's eyes (and, we may add, in God's eyes) ends up looking as foolish as a frog incessantly announcing his name. And on the other hand, Dickinson herself models the antidote to this self-absorption: gladly and boldly declaring – and embracing, with a wink – her identity as "Nobody"!

MORE LIGHT

For another picture of what "losing one's life" might look like, see Dickinson's "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain." It's a challenging poem, typically read as some kind of mental crisis, depression, or panic attack, but it can also be understood as a more positive "breaking through," moving beyond stifling forms of self-absorption, a "funeral" for the poet's former, mistaken sense of self – just the kind of insight that Jesus' paradoxical teachings may be meant to provoke.

For those who
want to save their
life will lose it, and
those who lose their
life for my sake, and
for the sake of the
gospel, will save it.

+ Mark 8:35





PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of letting go, praying, "God of grace, help me let go of what I need to let go of, trust you to do the saving, and trust myself to live boldly and humbly, gratefully and compassionately, as your beloved child. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Experiment with an "I'm Nobody!" fast this week, creating little sanctuaries of serenity. Try fasting from technology (or social media) for an hour, a day, or the whole week; or create a "Sabbath box" for cell phones or other devices, so you can better experience a respite from "Being Somebody," including the temptation to work, work, work. Being Nobody for a while can be a blessing!
- + Do you know someone (or know someone who knows someone) who is living an "all-in" life of service, devoting their time and energy to acts of love and justice? Make a special effort to thank them for their commitment and inspiration. Write them a handwritten note, and be sure to ask how you can help.
- + Send (or drop off) flowers to someone this week – anonymously. If you're feeling especially Dickinsonian, include the poem, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?"
- + In this passage, Jesus warns that our attempts to "gain the whole world" can in the process result in "forfeiting life." Make a list of the things that make you truly come alive. Discuss this topic with family or friends over a meal or online. What small, practical steps can you take to do these things more often?

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

READ

Scripture:

John 2:13-25

Poem:

"Some keep the Sabbath going
to church," by Emily Dickinson

Making a whip
of cords, he drove
all of them out of
the temple...

+ John 2:15

MEDITATE

Here Jesus is filled with fierce and righteous anger. Why? Because the temple – "my Father's house" – has lost its way, becoming a crass sacrificial system (money for buying animals to sacrifice). Jesus' love for the temple runs deep, and he doesn't want access to God's presence to be limited by finances or profiteering.

And at the same time, his actions provoke the question of where "the temple" really is. Does the sacred ground end at the sanctuary door? Or does it include the woods, the birds, and the sky, as both Genesis 1 and Dickinson's sly poem would suggest? Does the temple include Christ's own body, and so all of our bodies as well, since we are "the Body of Christ" (John 2:21)? And if it does: how shall we fiercely love and defend and participate in "the temple" today?

MORE LIGHT

For another exploration of both the world's sacred status, see Dickinson's "We should not mind so small a flower" – a poem likely about the gentian, a little, late-blooming flower in New England.





PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of creation, praying, "God of love, help me live today in ways that consecrate the world, defend the vulnerable, protect what is good, and honor creation. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Take a flower walk this week, intentionally looking for blossoms and buds, or the places they soon will be. As you go, reflect on Dickinson's line, "So instead of getting to Heaven, at last — / I'm going, all along." A variation on this way of walking is the Japanese practice of "forest bathing": mindfully exploring a forest, immersing our senses in the refreshing power of creation.
- + Try some "guerilla gardening" this week (or schedule some for later in the season), planting sunflower seeds — or other seeds or bulbs — in neglected or unexpected public spaces, sometimes called "orphaned land." Check out guerillagardening.org for tips and best practices.
- + In the spirit of "creation care," try eating more vegetarian or vegan meals this week than you normally would. Or consider fasting from accumulating any more "stuff" for the rest of Lent, not least because the amount of stuff humans have created now outweighs all life on earth (incredible but true - search for the online story from National Geographic)!
- + What does "righteous anger" look like in the world and in your own life? What should we be angry about? Where is your temple, the place or time or way you sense God's presence? Explore these questions with family or friends over a meal or online.





FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

READ


Scripture:

John 3:14-21

Poem:

"Wild Nights – Wild Nights!"

by Emily Dickinson.



Indeed, God did
not send the Son
into the world to
condemn the world,
but in order that
the world might be
saved through him.

+ John 3:17

MEDITATE

Jesus speaks here of both grace and judgment, but his emphasis is on grace: after all, in Numbers 21 (the story Jesus references in this passage) the bronze serpent Moses lifted up saved all the afflicted Israelites, not just a few; and likewise, God's Son came not to condemn the world but "in order that the world might be saved."

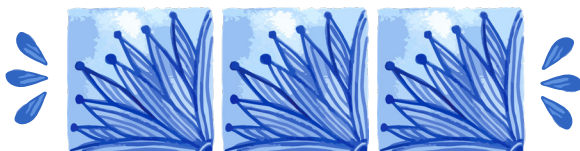
Dickinson's poem is typically read as erotic, and it is – but we can also read it as riffing on the ancient tradition that uses erotic poetry as a way to explore the love between God and humanity (the Song of Solomon being the most famous example). And reading John and Emily side-by-side helps highlight a particular idea: Dickinson writes of abiding "in Thee," the beloved; and John writes not only of believing but also of acting "in God": "their deeds have been done in God" (John 3:21). Both texts, then, invite us to consider a radical intimacy between lover and beloved, divine and human, so intimate, in fact, as to be a kind of communion, "rowing in Eden." In the end, if the Song of Songs is any guide, it's this closeness, this sweet, wild companionship, that God wants with us.

MORE LIGHT

For another of Dickinson's love poems that include theological dimensions, see "That I did always love" – a compact little argument that love is life, that life is immortal, and that these truths are shown nowhere more clearly than in Christ's death and resurrection.

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of love, praying, "God of love, help me love, and abide, and live in communion with you. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + We all know we should love one another – but what if, following the ancient tradition of poetically seeing divine love in and through human love, we thought of our acts of love as manifestations, channels of God's love for the world? How would that change our decisions? This week, take one action each day with this idea in mind: being a conduit of God's love. Read the Song of Solomon – and then reread "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!"
- + The writer and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer has a lovely idea: while we may love the world, she writes, in a quite tangible sense it's also true that the world loves us: providing for our day to day, moment to moment needs, from the air we breathe to the food we eat to the colors we behold and on and on. This week, try to experience the world around you in this way: as a tangible, sensuous expression of God's love. Record your experiences and reflections in a journal.
- + The apostle Paul wrote that "Love is patient, love is kind." Be on the lookout this week for moments – a conversation, a social media post, a phone call – in which you might be tempted to impatience or unkindness, and instead offer words or acts of love.
- + What (specifically!) makes you feel most loved? How do you most typically show others that you love them? Explore these questions with family or friends over a meal or online.



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



READ

Scripture:

John 12:20-33

Poem:

"I know that He exists,"
by Emily Dickinson.

MEDITATE:

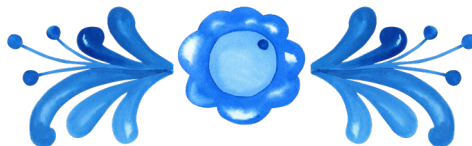
Here Jesus compares his coming death to a grain of wheat falling to the ground, "dying," and thereby giving rise to a new plant, and so "bearing much fruit." His opponents (and his friends!) may think they are burying him forever in a grave, but they'll actually be planting him for a new round of fruitfulness and growth: the resurrection and birth of the church to come.

Very truly, I tell
you, unless a grain
of wheat falls into
the earth and dies,
it remains just a
single grain; but
if it dies, it bears
much fruit.

+ John 12:24

There's almost a playfulness, a trickster's mischief in this image, this recruiting of his unwitting opponents into the salvation process itself, as if to say, *Ha! You think you'll be killing me, but you'll actually be planting me! You think you'll put an end to the movement, but you'll actually be making it more fruitful than ever! For "unless a grain of wheat falls..."*

Dickinson's poem can help us catch sight of this divine playfulness, a spirit too often obscured in many all-too-serious religious circles. Dickinson herself was critical of the solemn Congregationalist style in



which she was raised, and here she paints God as a hidden, playful presence, “fondly ambushing” us when we least expect it, the better to elicit a blissful, joyful “surprise.” But if our search for God becomes too “piercing earnest,” if our joy “glazes” over into a solemnity reminiscent of a corpse’s “stiff stare” – then we’ll have missed the playful point entirely. Our good-humored hide-and-seek will have become a grim, funereal “crawl.”

MORE LIGHT

For another take on the mystery of Jesus’ death, see Dickinson’s “Your thoughts don’t have words every day,” in which she explores how mysteries surround us: from the wordless-but-important thoughts that cross our minds to the sips of Communion wine we take, never fully comprehending the “price” and rarity of the cross.

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of joy, praying, “God of wonder and delight, help me notice your playful, joyful presence today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”
- + Schedule a game night or two this week, at home or online (many classic games – like Scattergories – work on Zoom!). Remember that times together in joy are great ways to build relationships, and they also give us a taste of the divine joy that’s shot through creation.
- + Experiment with a “joyful fast” this week, setting aside things and activities that create undue distraction and stress: screen time, the news cycle, your social media feed – whatever threatens to pull you out of the playfulness of the present moment.
- + If you have a “Little Free Library” nearby, donate three books that will help make the world a better place: a book on racial justice and reconciliation, a book on climate change, or a novel that makes you think, laugh, and cry all at once.
- + One theologian has called Mozart’s music distinctive precisely because of its character as “play,” and the way it gives us a glimpse of the playfulness of God. What music brings you the most joy? The most insight into creation’s playful, delightful dimension? Explore these questions with family and friends, and make a joy-filled playlist for the week!

✿ PALM SUNDAY ✿

READ

Scripture:

Mark 11:1-11

Poem:


"This is my letter to the World,"
by Emily Dickinson.

MEDITATE

Jesus was a skilled student and faithful lover of scripture, and here in a kind of street theater he enacts a passage from the ancient prophet Zechariah. The crowds fully participate in the performance, lavishing praise on the triumphant king, "humble and riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). The sudden appearance of crowds, the waving palm branches, the ancient chant – it all gives the impression of creation itself rising up to praise Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Indeed, in Luke's version of the story, Jesus says that even if human beings were to keep silent, "the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:40).

Dickinson, too, senses a message of "tender Majesty" arising from "Nature" herself, a message Nature gives to "Hands I cannot see" – a phrase that could refer to God, or to her future readership, or both. In effect, Dickinson casts Nature as a poet declaring a message; and so Dickinson, for her part, is a poetic listener, transcribing "The simple News that Nature told" to God and posterity.

Both texts, then, give the impression of a much larger conversation going on between creation and God, a parade and symphony of praise – with "tender Majesty" – in which each of us is called to play our part.



Then those who
went ahead and
those who followed
were shouting,
"Hosanna! Blessed
is the one who
comes in the name
of the Lord!"

+ Mark 11:9

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of praise, praying, "God of glory, God of love, help me praise you today in all I do and say – and give me ears to hear creation's praise all around. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Text three people today with words of praise and encouragement – and write a handwritten note to a fourth. And while you're at it, write a positive online review for a local business you love.
- + Experiment with a "criticism fast" this Holy Week, refraining from disparaging yourself and others, thereby making room for words of support and appreciation. And as you avoid self-criticism, try some daily affirmations each day this week (see below).
- + Where in creation do you sense a parade of praise? What stones, what creatures, what landscapes? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with family or friends over a meal or online.



MAUNDY THURSDAY



READ

Scripture:

John 13:1-35

Poem:

"I dwell in Possibility,"
by Emily Dickinson.

MEDITATE

What does genuine love look like in practice? Here Jesus teaches his disciples that it looks like humble and vulnerable service: foot-washing tangibly illustrates his new commandment to "love one another, as I have loved you" ("Maundy" is from an old word for "mandate" or command). But this simple, surprising act also has the effect of conjuring up a vision of a whole new world, a world in which masters and servants serve one another, in which the old hierarchies are turned upside down. More than a mere act of service, then, Jesus performs an act of imagination, poetically evoking the new world God is bringing into being.

Then he poured
water into a basin
and began to wash
the disciples' feet
and to wipe them
with the towel that
was tied around him.
+ John 13:5

Dickinson thinks of poetry not as a pastime, but as a way of life, a place to "dwell": "I dwell in Possibility – / A fairer House than Prose." This "house," it turns out, is the temple of creation itself, a world in which her chief "occupation" is to spread her arms and "gather Paradise." This portrait of "poetic license" in the strongest sense may help us see what Jesus is doing: giving his disciples (including us!) a tangible taste of a new world, a Way of Life, a Way of genuine love.





PRACTICES

- + Today light a candle of possibility, praying, "God of grace, in you all things are possible. Help my love become more tangible, and our narrow hands reach wide and gather paradise. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Reflect today on the ways others have been kind to you, and express your gratitude with a call or a note. Kindness is a kind of poetry – it makes a new world!
- + Wash the feet of a family member; give someone a gift; offer a pet a special treat; or put up a new bird feeder outside, or in a local park.
- + Go on a "paradise walk" today, gathering in – actually, in a bouquet of spring flowers, or figuratively, with a journal or camera – as much as your narrow hands can carry.



GOOD FRIDAY

READ

Scripture:

John 18:1 - 19:42

Poem:

"I heard a Fly buzz – when I died,"

by Emily Dickinson.

MEDITATE

We often think of Jesus' death as exceptional – exceptionally harrowing, or exceptionally significant, and so on. But a major aspect of his death is just how commonplace it was: crucifixion was a familiar form of Roman execution in those days, the fate of common criminals and anyone deemed a threat to the Empire, a point John makes in this passage by mentioning the nameless "two others" crucified alongside Jesus (John 19:18).

In other words, part of the meaning of Good Friday is that, in Jesus, God joins us in a form of torture and death that was all-too-common in those days, and which continues to be so in our own, even as it takes different forms. Indeed, part of what makes the story of this Friday "Good" is that it declares that God is with us in the everydayness of suffering and death.

Dickinson's poem can help us catch sight of this side of the crucifixion. The atmosphere is emotional and dramatic – even Jesus, "the King," is expected to appear – but "interposed" in the scene is an epitome of both the everyday and the unnerving: a common housefly. The fly gets "Between the light – and me –", a chilling, lonely, sardonic, and dreadfully ordinary portrait of death.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

+ John 19:30



PRACTICES

- + Today light a candle of grief, praying, "God of mercy, forgive us. Open our eyes and our hearts to the ways you continue to be crucified today, and stir our spirits to act with love and justice. In Jesus' name, Amen."
- + Reach out to someone who has grief or sorrow in their life today – just to let them know you're thinking about them.
- + How can the "everyday" suffering and death of Jesus open our hearts to suffering and death in the world around us? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with family or friends over a meal or online.

HOLY SATURDAY


READ

Scripture:

Matthew 27:57-66

Poems:

"After great pain, a formal feeling comes" and "It was not Death, for I stood up," by Emily Dickinson.



Mary
Magdalene
and the other
Mary were there,
sitting opposite
the tomb.

+ Matthew 27:61

MEDITATE

Holy Saturday is sometimes overlooked, as if it's simply a hiatus between Good Friday and Easter Sunday – but in fact, it's a crucial passageway, a kind of abyss, a place of absence without which the presence of the risen Christ can't be as fully, joyously felt.

These two Dickinson poems help emotionally color this mysterious day. The first explores the numbness and disorientation that follow periods of pain, the "Hour of Lead" and depression that no doubt descended on Jesus' followers after his death. And the second is a mediation on despair (or better, an emptiness that doesn't even rise

to the level of being called “despair”) as a kind of “living death.” These are difficult emotions – but they are also quite common in human life, and seldom talked about, and in any case may help us more viscerally experience what for Jesus’ followers must have felt like the death of hope itself.

PRACTICES

- + Today light no candles. Pray in silence.
- + Find an hour, or a larger portion of the day, for a silent retreat, at home or on a walk.
- + One of the traditions around Holy Saturday is the “Harrowing of Hell,” the idea that on this day, Jesus descended into hell as a gracious liberator. Though Christians disagree on how precisely to understand “heaven” and “hell,” the poetics of this tradition are clear: God’s astonishing grace knows no limit. Do an online search for the paintings inspired by this theme, and peruse the countless frescoes, icons, and other works of art that imaginatively bring this poetically powerful idea to life. Jesus is often pictured lifting up Adam and Eve by the hand, suggesting that God’s salvation is ultimately for all humanity.



FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT GRIEF

1. People mean well, but we will say dumb things.
2. Your grief will make other people uncomfortable – that’s okay!
3. You can talk or not talk about your loss – both are completely appropriate!
4. Nighttime may be the hardest time.
5. You will know joy again – it may be different – but joy will come with the morning!

EASTER SUNDAY

READ

Scripture:

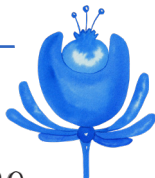
Mark 16:1-8

Poems:

"To see the Summer Sky" and
"Tell all the truth but tell it slant,"
by Emily Dickinson.

And very
early on the
first day of the
week, when the
sun had risen,
they went to the
tomb.

+ Mark 16:2



MEDITATE

Jesus is risen – hallelujah! The forty days of Lent now give way to fifty days of Eastertide, a sprawling garden overflowing with the poetry of resurrection: an empty tomb; a risen, wounded savior; a joyful, astounded community; and a promise of the Spirit to come.

Dickinson understood well that poetry isn't limited to the page: to truly "see the Summer Sky," she wrote, is to see a poem before our eyes – though like the risen Jesus, who ascends to heaven, such poems-made-of-life often elude our grasp. The truth is always gilded in radiance and mystery, and so to "tell all the truth," Dickinson insists, we must "tell it slant," for "The Truth must dazzle gradually," or everyone be blind. No wonder the mystery of Easter morning requires an annual 50-day festival of celebration and reflection!

The light has lengthened
into morning. The new life
of spring has arrived, and
"the Summer Sky" is on the
way. Go now in peace to love
and serve God and neighbor,
spreading wide your "narrow Hands
/ To gather Paradise –"

Hallelujah!



SPECIAL EVENTS OF THE SEASON

