

WINTER 2020
ISSUE NO. 12

THE TABLE

CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY

WORSHIP

2019 CONVOCATION
& SYNOD

Excerpt from
OPEN AND UNAFRAID
by W. David O. Taylor

“Why Lament
in Worship?”
by Rachel Wilhelm

Letter from the Editor

WHAT IS WORSHIP? In our opening article, Father Dan asks this question, pinpointing a perspective past the “gods” that clamor for our worship to the One whose sacrificial love draws our adoration to Himself. *Worship* has been the focus of our Diocese, Christ our Hope, through Convocation and Synod of 2019 and will continue to be into the upcoming 2020 Regional Retreats. Here in *The Table*, we join our minds and hearts in that pondering. It is quickly evident that this complex concept has a great deal of nuance, as we hear from our local and broader Anglican community that worship is to rest in God’s promises with thanksgiving as much as it is using our divinely-given talents at work for the Kingdom; that worship is both an expression of joy and thanksgiving and a bringing of our honest self in grief or lament before One who truly sees us. This seemingly contradictory aspect of worship is exemplified in the book of Psalms. Indeed, the psalms, as W. David O. Taylor presented at Convocation and Synod, and shares with us in this issue through a chapter of his upcoming book, are a very God-given guide to authentic worship in all its facets.

Whatever the tone or practical application, one thing remains the same about worship in our context--the One to whom it is directed. All our verbal or physical outpourings are a focused beam reflecting back the light shone on us in darkness before we ever cried out for its illumination.



When we were giving everything to loves that bound us in darkness and death, His light came near to beckon us into a new, lifegiving bond. It is especially poignant to reflect on these things as we celebrate Christmas and Epiphany when, after waiting in the shadows of Advent, we at last come into clear focus on the One who came to show us not only *how* to worship a loving God, but also *why* He is worthy of that worship. May the reflections offered here on the topic of worship encourage and inspire your own generous offering of self to this God.

Laura Fissel
Managing Editor

O Emmanuel

By Malcolm Guite

O come, O come, and be our God-with-us
O long-sought With-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.
Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name,
Come Root, and Key, and King, and holy Flame.
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,
Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness
Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling
bands.

ABOUT THE ART

Cover Art

Shepherd's Adoration (1646)
by pupil of Rembrandt

Once thought to be a painting of Rembrandt, this subtle but stunning depiction of the shepherd's worship of Christ is now thought to be the work of an unnamed pupil of the famous painter.

Opening Poetry

"O Emmanuel"
by Malcolm Guite

English poet, Anglican priest, and academic, Guite has authored five books of poetry and three full-length collections in addition to several books on faith and theology. This poem is included in his collection *Waiting on the Word: A Poem a Day for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*.

Art for "A Working Theology" (pg 20)

"St. Joseph and the Child Jesus"
by John Collier

A prolific American artist, one of Collier's many notabilities is his work as chief sculptor of the Catholic memorial at Ground Zero in New York City.

THE TABLE

FEATURED STORIES



2019 Convocation & Synod,
Reflections by Dr. Benjamin Wall
& Tressa Czysz



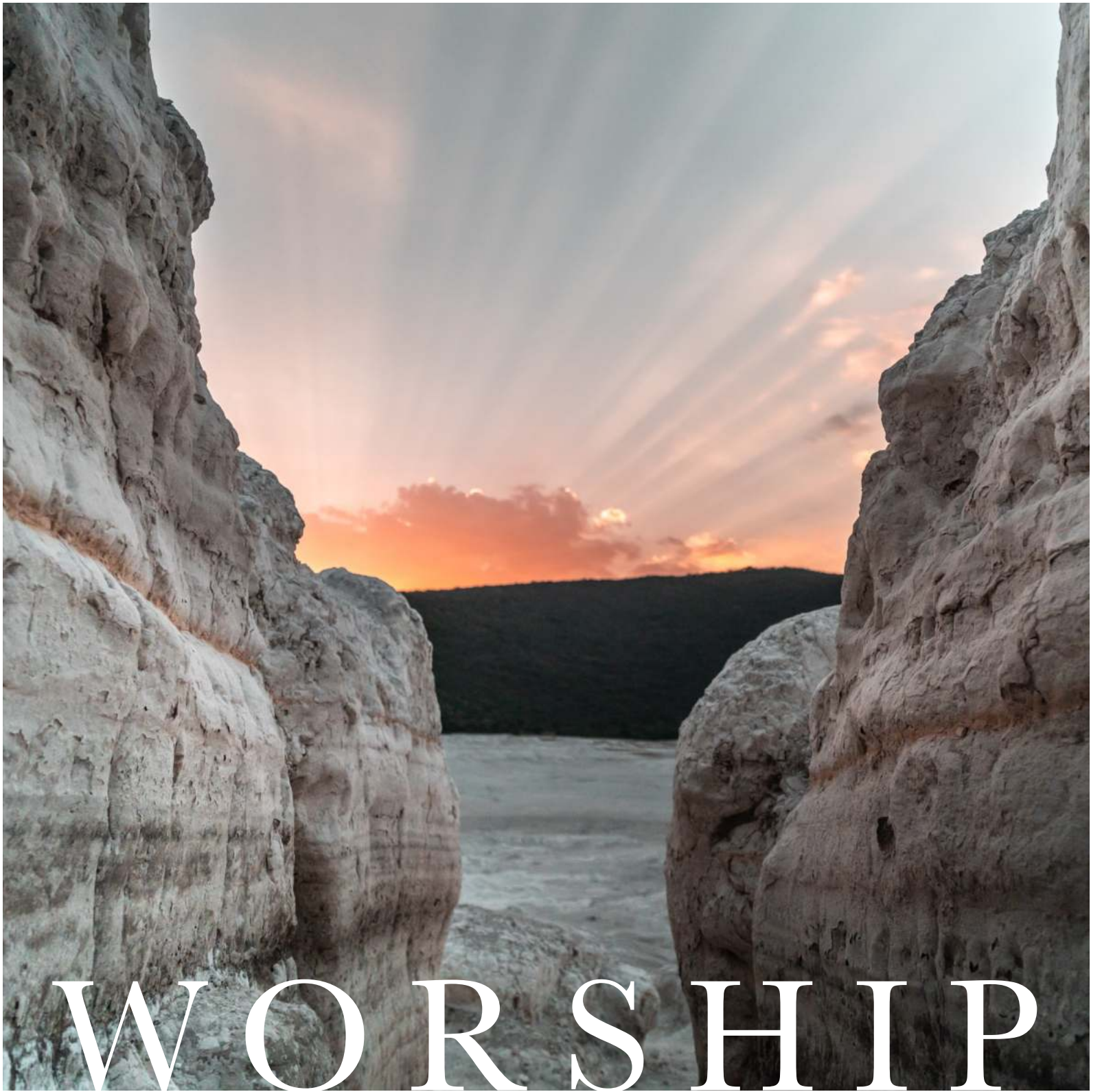
Open and Unafraid, Chapter One
by W. David O. Taylor



“Why Lament in Worship?”
by Rachel Wilhelm

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WORSHIP

orienting our gaze

by Father Dan Nobles

Last summer, three brothers and I traveled to southwest New Mexico. We hiked through parts of the Gila Wilderness. We visited cliff dwellings where early communities made their homes in the rocks of the mountains. No one had lived in these caves for over 800 years. Still, when we stood inside the rooms and saw the darkened ceiling from cooking fires and smelled the smoky scent lingering in the air, we felt connected to those who had made these places their households. We felt the enduring hospitality as we walked through their homes.

Similar to the lingering aroma of the cliff dwellers, our daily prayers and weekly Wednesday evening Eucharist at Redeemer soaks into the walls and furnishings of the Oratory, transforming the space into a seasoned place of welcomed worship. Through ancient practices of communion with God, our worship continues to saturate the space, making it sacred. These illustrations introduce a central question: what is worship?

Contemporary practices sometimes add to a general confusion around worship. For some, we may label music and praise as “worship” so that music directors become “worship leaders.” For others, our “worship service” may become the main thrust of our education and evangelization effort. We may focus our energies to make “worship” entertaining and attractive to participants. Certainly music, praise, education, and evangelism are all good things, but are these the principle drivers of worship?

As Anglicans, we enjoy a rich history of worship. Our Book of Common Prayer offers liturgies of beautiful worship, as well as a rhythm of worship that includes daily worship of the Divine Offices, weekly worship where we receive Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and special memorials and commemorations throughout the year. We can learn much about true worship by considering the treasure given us through the Book of Common Prayer.

As we explore worship, we soon realize that it is truly a continual prayer. Each Sunday, we are invited into communion

with God through the prayer of our opening acclamation; our worship continues through other prayers--of praise, of hearing God’s Word proclaimed in Holy Scripture, of faith and confession, and of thanksgiving. We offer our petitions to God, and we listen as God speaks to us in the stillness of worship. Our Book of Common Prayer teaches us that worship is communion with God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and us. Our focus in worship is God. He fills us with himself. The self-satisfaction of our music and preaching fades into the background. The culmination of God’s divine communion with us is discovered in Christ giving himself to us in his body and blood during the Eucharist. This is worship as handed down to us in the Book of Common Prayer. The 2019 Book of Common Prayer recently published by the Anglican Church of North America retains the lovely orthodoxy of that worship.

As communion with God, worship nourishes and nurtures us. That nourishment and nurture comes from God’s communion as he gives us his grace. His grace is very different from our desire to enjoy the works of our own hands. The music and singing may be beautiful, the prayers and preaching may be inspiring. However, if we gather for those things, then our worship is muted and misdirected. When we offer those beauties and inspirations as our adorations to God, then he offers us riches that are beyond our expectations. We discover his grace, mercy, and peace. Our spirits are filled with the harmony of the Holy Spirit. We surrender our self-interests and become focused on the compassion of Jesus Christ. We are absorbed into relationship with the Father himself. By losing ourselves in worship, our true selves are discovered as God’s beloved daughters and sons.

Worship is prayer. Worship is communion with God. Worship is also the overflowing expression of our affection for God. Consider the psalms, which have served as the center of worship for 3,000 years. Worship in the synagogues of ancient Israel was focused by reciting the psalms, lifting them up as prayers, and offering the Word of God back to God. The earliest church fathers and mothers contin-

ued the practice of praying the psalms as the centerpiece of worship. The early contemplative practice *Lectio Divina* (or “speaking the divine”) stems from praising God’s majesty through the words of Psalms. What drove the psalmists to pen the beautiful words that bring comfort to the hearer and esteem to God? One can hear the psalmist’s swelling affection for God and the deep thirst for his affectionate response to us. When we realize his love for us, and when we are filled with his blessings, we reach a point where we cannot help but cry out our thanksgiving for him. That response is worship.

We are compelled by the desire to understand what worship is so that we can orient our gaze on the object of our worship. There is a disciplined aspect of worship. Certainly, we want our worship to be decent and orderly. We desire beauty and an atmosphere of joy. We want to welcome others into our worship, to join us in praise and honor. Let us frequently pause and question the motivation for those desires. May it always be focused on God, who alone “is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise.” When we begin to stray from that focus, may our hearts remind us that God is the totality of worship. May our worship wholly be the feeling and expression of our reverence and adoration for God. May we join our voices with the psalmist of Psalm 67, who wrote

“May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!”



Christ Our Hope's 2019
Convocation
and *Synod*



When we gather together each week at Church of the Redeemer, it is helpful to recall that we are just a small portion of those who gather all over the world--of those who went before us, and of those who will gather after us. "They shall tell of the Lord to the generations to come; And to a people yet unborn shall they declare his righteousness" (Psalm 22:30b-31a). I was certainly reminded of this at Convocation and Synod as we gathered with brothers and sisters from North Carolina all the way up to Maine who are part of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope. What a beautiful reminder!

As we gather each time for Holy Eucharist, our liturgy guides us and forms us into the likeness of Christ. Liturgy teaches us to declare who our God is, to sing praise to his Name, to kneel in humility and confess our sins, to stand and receive the peace which passes all understanding, and to share it with our neighbors. And each week, the culmination of our service is when we are invited to the Table to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But what about when we are not ready to sing God's praise, or do not feel worthy to come eat from the Table? Should we remain at home, or come and be silent? Is all of worship only praise? If we turn to the psalms, full of prayers and songs, we find much more than "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23). We also find prayers of lament and prayers of righteous anger. Prayers crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22). Prayers that plead with God that he would remove the wicked from the earth.

At first, some of these psalms seem odd or even too much for us to read or pray together. We may feel tempted to be consumed by anger

if we begin to let it out at all, or we might get lost in lamenting when things are crumbling all around us and we feel overwhelmed. But what richness might we find if we are formed by the psalms to bring our sorrows, our frustrations, and our joys before the Lord, both individually and corporately? Perhaps we fear being engulfed in anger because all we have ever been taught (implicitly or explicitly) is to suppress our anger and treat it as a negative emotion. Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor shared with us that "God has gifted us with psalms of anger to help us feel angry without being undone." These psalms also remind us what righteous anger looks like and instruct us that we can and should bring these things to God to ask him to act on behalf of his people and for the sake of his name. When all seems lost, what hope can we cling to? Where do we train our hearts to turn when all seems hopeless? The psalms remind us to cry out in pain before the Lord, but also to remember that he is faithful. I wonder what difference it might make to be familiar with the psalms and to recount them to ourselves and to each other as each new day brings challenges and blessings.

I believe if we understand worship to encompass how we live our lives every day, not just on Sunday mornings, it becomes even more necessary that we have a way to faithfully bring before God all that makes our hearts ache--especially those things that make them ache so badly that we are driven to action, calling out to God for justice. I hope to learn the language of the psalms so that I may have words for all seasons, and I hope you will join me.

*Written by Tressa Czysz
Redeemer Lay Delegate*



The term synod means “assembly.” Each year, all clergy, along with three lay delegates from Church of the Redeemer, gather with other clergy and lay people within our diocese to decide issues related to church doctrine, administration, and/or the daily fabric of our life together. While synod technically entails the more formal meeting that occurs the morning of our last day together, the first two days (convocation) include times of worship, prayer, fellowship, and study. Each year, we are given time, opportunity, and space to pray and reflect on a particular topic and/or theme. Over the previous three years, our diocese has focused on the intersections of the Bible, theology, and human sexuality (2016); discipleship in a secular age (2017); and immigration in a globalized society (2018).

This year, the convocation topic was the worship of the church. In songs and images, rhetoric and poetry, stories and movements, the church worships for the life of the world and thus bears witness to the

goodness of the good news. In so many ways, the psalter is the prayerbook for the people of God wherein we are given a particular language for particular times at any given moment of our lives—in times of uncertainty, confusion, pain and suffering, doubt, anxiety, anger, and celebration and hope. And it is in and through worship, in particular our praying and singing of the psalms, that we as individuals and the church as a whole are remade. What is being implied here is that worship remakes us by way of conforming our will to the will of the Lord. The psalms provide us with a grammar that corresponds well with the heart of God, providing us with a way of making meaning of a life of faith in this world. And it is in singing and praying along with the psalter that our lives of faith are given definite shape as we seek to listen and remain responsive to the presence of God. Such listening and responsiveness is rooted in the biblical witness of praise of a God who is present with creatures.

Written by Dr. Benjamin Wall



At Convocation, Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor spoke on the theme of the worship of the church. With the publication of the 2019 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, and the upcoming release of David's new book, this was an exciting and thought-provoking time of exploring Psalms as the “prayerbook of the church for the life of the world.”¹

An Anglican priest, W. David O. Taylor teaches theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts* (Eerdmans, 2019) and *Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life* (Thomas Nelson, 2020). A pastor for ten years in Austin, Texas, he has lectured widely on the arts, from Thailand to South Africa. In 2016, he produced a short film on the psalms with Bono and Eugene Peterson.²



Please enjoy the following excerpt from Open and Unafraid, set for release March 2020 (pages 7-10).

¹ <https://www.adhope.org/convocation-synod-general-info>

² available for free viewing on YouTube

The cover features a decorative border of orange floral and leaf motifs. The text is centered within this border.

FOREWORD BY
EUGENE
PETERSON

OPEN
AND
UNAFRAID

THE
PSALMS
AS A
GUIDE
TO LIFE



W. DAVID O. TAYLOR

Chapter 1

Honesty

“The Psalms as script for the telling of secrets is fully occupied by honest women and men of faith.”
—— Walter Brueggemann¹

“We must speak honestly—but also wisely.”
—— Ellen Davis²

Honest to God

Everyone has secrets, and whatever they may be, with our secrets we hide. We hide from others and we hide from our self. Ultimately, we hide from God. In our hiding, we choose darkness over light; we embrace death instead of life; we elect to be lonely rather than to be relationally at home with others. And the certain result of all our hiding is that we become cut off from our Source of life, strangers to ourselves, and alienated from creation, which, in the end, is pathetic, disfiguring, and an utterly tragic loss of life.

The psalms understand the human condition. In it we see a mirror of humanity at its best and at its worst. We see our very selves reflected back, “be he a faithful soul or be he a sinner” as Athanasius once described the experience of looking at the psalms, as if in a mirror of the soul.³ Walter Brueggemann writes that the Psalter “is an articulation of all the secrets of the human heart and the human community, all voiced out loud in speech and in song to God amidst the community.”⁴

If we are to be free, Brueggemann argues, our secrets must be told. If we wish to flourish in our God-given calling, our secrets must be brought into the light so that we are no longer governed by their corrosive and destructive power. And if we desire to be truly human, we must abandon all our efforts not just to hide our secrets but also to justify our secrets. This is what the psalms help us to do: to tell our secrets faithfully.

To tell our secrets faithfully is to counter the devastating effects of our primordial sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, their first impulse was to hide. In making clothes for themselves, they hid their bodies. When they heard the sound of their Maker’s voice, they hid from God. In their telltale lies, they hid from the truth, and in their mutual accusations, they hid from each other. All the ways in which Adam and Eve hid resulted in one thing: their dehumanization.

Like Adam and Eve, when we hide from God, we become alienated from God. When we hide from others, we cut ourselves off from the life-giving gift of community. When we hide from creation, we deny our God-ordained creaturely nature and often seek to exploit rather than to care for creation. And when we hide from ourselves, we become strangers to ourselves through selfish behavior that ultimately does violence to our nature as humans made in God’s image.

What the psalms offer us is help to un-hide: to stand honestly before God without fear, to face one another vulnerably without shame, and to encounter life in the world without any of the secrets that would demean and distort our humanity. The psalms, then, are for those who know that they spend much of their life hiding secrets; they are also for those who know that standing in the presence of God “is the one place where such secrets cannot and must not be hidden.”⁵

The psalms invite us, thus, to stand in the light, to see ourselves truly and to receive the reformatory work of God through the formative words of the psalmist, so that we might be rehumanized in Christ.

The Honesty of the Psalms

Psalm 139 is the paradigmatic psalm of the honest person. There is nothing that the psalmist hides from God. He invites God to see it all. “You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me” (v. 1 cev). It is a cleansing and healing self-disclosure. To be known by God in this way, through and through, nothing hidden (v. 15), nothing excused (v. 23), is beyond the psalmist’s capacity to fully grasp. “It is more than I can understand,” he says (v. 6).

It is only in standing open before God in this way, naked like a baby and unashamed as the beloved of God (vv. 13–16), that the psalmist discovers his truest identity. “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (v. 14). In psalmist’s waking hours and asleep at night, the Lord is there (vv. 2–3). No height, no depth, not the darkest night, not a secret thought, neither heaven nor hell, can hide the psalmist from the Lord’s searching gaze (vv. 8–12). “I cannot escape your presence,” he confesses (v. 7).

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), xi.

² Ellen F. Davis, *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2011), 9.

³ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 106.

⁴ Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, xi-xii.

⁵ Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, 94.

Nor does he wish to. The psalmist feels as precious as the Lord's thoughts toward him (v. 17). He is secure in the Lord's sovereign care (v. 16). All the days of his life are seen by God. It is for that reason that the psalmist welcomes the (often terrifying) searching gaze of God. "Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about" (v. 23 the message). To what end does the psalmist pray in this manner? It is so that he might walk in the life-giving "way," echoing the words of Psalm 1.

To walk in this "way everlasting" is to walk in the way that leads to wholeness. We walk it by, among other things, praying in the manner that the psalms model for us: "prayer that is comprehensive (not patched together from emotional fragments scattered around that we chance upon) and honest (not a series of more or less sincere verbal poses that we think might please our Lord)."⁶ Said otherwise, to pray the psalms is to pray ourselves into wholeness.⁷ How exactly do we become whole in this way?

We become whole by praying our honest joys and our honest sorrows. We pray our honest praise of God and our honest anger at God; we pray also for honest speech in our words to God. With the psalmist we pray that God will protect our tongues from deceit (Ps. 34:13). We pray that we not sin with our words (Ps. 39:1). We pray that we resist the urge to gossip and flatter (Ps. 12:3), and that we choose to live with integrity (Ps. 41:12), rejecting words that both inflate and deflate us before God (Ps. 32).

To pray in this way is to keep ourselves open to others and to God. In refusing the temptation to hide from others and from God, we refuse the temptation to use words as a cover-up.⁸ We speak instead plainly, trustingly. When we do this, we find ourselves praying freely to God, in a way that frees us. The Psalter understands that we do not often succeed at this kind of speech and prayer, and so it repeatedly welcomes the penitent to confess to God, in the hearing of God's people:

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (Ps. 32:1–2)

The psalmist describes the experience of "keeping silent" about sin as a kind of disintegration. His bones turn to powder (Ps. 32:3). His energy dissipates, "the very pith of my body decomposed as if baked in the summer heat" (v. 4).⁹ He risks returning to the dust (Ps. 22:15). When he honestly confesses his sin—"not holding back, not denying, not making excuses"—the Lord forgives him.¹⁰ Instead of "covering up" his sin, God covers his sin (Ps. 32:1, 5), and instead of hiding from God, God becomes his "hiding place."

If honesty is the capacity to speak truthfully to God, sincerely to others, and without any lie about the world in its real condition, then the psalms invite us to honest prayer about all things, not just the things that we suffer or regret. We pray honestly about our shame and bouts of depression (Ps. 88).¹¹ We pray honestly about our hate (Ps. 137).¹² And we pray honestly about our experiences of trust and thanksgiving and joy (Pss. 23; 46; 27; 91).¹³

We pray honestly about God's trustworthy character, the wonder of creation (Ps. 104), the beauty of torah (Ps. 119), and the virtue of wisdom (Pss. 37; 49; 112). We pray it all, as Eugene Peterson encourages us: "We must pray who we actually are, not who we think we should be."¹⁴

When we pray the psalms by the empowering and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit, we pray not just who we actually are but also who we can be and shall be by grace. As Athanasius sees it, the psalms not only enable us to be wholly ourselves before God, but they also enable us to be wholly our true selves. This is only possible, he argues, because Christ himself makes it possible. Before coming among us, Athanasius writes, Christ sketched the likeness of true humanity for us in the psalms. In praying them, then, we experience the healing and reformation of our humanity.¹⁵

6 Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 3-4.

7 Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, *Journey Through the Psalms* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), chapter 1.

8 Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 7.

9 Calvin Seerveld, *Voicing God's Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 51.

10 Eugene Peterson, *Praying with the Psalms: A Year of Daily Prayers and Reflections on the Words of David* (New York: HarperOne, 1993), 62. Cf. John D. Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 28; and Bernhard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*, with Steven Bishop (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 95

11 Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Spirituality of the Psalms* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 131 ("The honest confession of weakness and dependency by sick persons in the psalms is something of an amazement...The sick person soon collapses into depression").

12 Peterson, *Answering God*, 100; and Hopkins, *Journey through the Psalms*, 5.

13 Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N. Jacobson, *Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 56.

14 Peterson, *Answering God*, 100.

15 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), 106-7.

The good news for the follower of Jesus is that the decision to be honest to God, which the psalms require of us, does not result in self-absorption because we have become obsessed with the cross-examination of our heart and mind. Nor does it result in self-hatred because we feel that our sin has the last and most definitive word on our life. Grace has the last word, not sin, as Karl Barth rightly reminds us. No matter how great our fault or failure, we cannot sin apart from the grace of God.

“We are forbidden,” Barth writes, “to take sin more seriously than grace, or even as seriously as grace.”¹⁶ Why? Because God in Christ does not take sin more seriously than grace, even if it remains true that God takes sin with deadly seriousness. We can be honest to God about the best and worst parts of our human condition, because we know that the grace of God precedes our honest confessions, the grace of God undergirds our honest thanksgivings, and the grace of God follows our honest laments.

What happens when we pray the psalms under the light of God’s grace? We become free to pray with abandonment because we have abandoned ourselves to *this* gracious God.¹⁷ We have no need to hide from this God because we are so confident in his grace. And because Jesus comes to us “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), we can be confident that we shall be found and filled with grace. We, too, can pray daring prayers because we trust that Jesus himself prays them with us and in us by the power of his Holy Spirit.¹⁸

Conclusion

“The Psalms make it possible,” writes John Goldingay, “to say things that are otherwise unsayable. In church, they have the capacity to free us to talk about things that we cannot talk about anywhere else.”¹⁹ Ellen Davis says something similar when she writes that the psalms “enable us to bring into our conversation with God feelings and thoughts most of us think we need to get rid of before God will be interested in hearing from us.”²⁰

The psalms welcome all such honest speech in order that we might encounter the “life that really is life” (1 Tim. 6:19). If the common saying within recovery ministries is true, that we are only as sick as the secrets we keep, then the secrets that we keep result in the deterioration of our humanity. Kept hidden, our secrets rob us of vitality. But when they are brought into the gracious light of God, they no longer hold a destructive power over us, and a space is made for God, who “knows the secrets of the heart” (Ps. 44:21), to rehumanize us.

There is a reason why honesty and community are deeply linked to each other in the psalms—and in this book as well. It is virtually impossible to be honest in the way that the Psalter invites us to be apart from a community that has fully embraced the grace of God. Likewise, a community that refuses to be honest to God, from whom no secrets are hid, cannot fully live out the faith, hope, and love that the Psalter invites us to inhabit in the name of the One who opens the way to the Father and who generously gives us the Spirit so that we might live without fear.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.3, bk. 2, trans. Harold Knight, G. W. Bromiley, J. K. S. Reid, and R. H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 41.

¹⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, bk. 2, 192.

¹⁸ Timothy and Kathy Keller describe Psalm 44:23 this way: “‘Awake Lord!’ is the daring but honest cry.” Keller, *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms* (New York: Viking, 2015), 93.

¹⁹ John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 22–23.

²⁰ Davis, *Getting Involved with God*, 5.



SABBATH REST

by Lena Van Wyk

Sabbath worship is at the heart of the work we do at our church farm. Now, at first reading, this might seem like an oxymoron. How can sabbath--the ceasing of work--be at the heart of a job full of manual labor and toil?

We have the misconception that sabbath is what happens out of exhaustion once a week-- God's permission to veg out after the arduous toil of the other six days. But the famous pastor Eugene Peterson calls this a "bastard Sabbath" (excuse his French), which is an apt description of the sabbaths I spend in a Netflix haze. It's a shadow sabbath: not a full realization of the joyous delight that God intends for it. God does not rest on the Seventh Day because he is exhausted from his toil: he rests so that he can sit back and take true delight in all that he has made. Shabbat, the Hebrew word for Sabbath or the seventh day, symbolizes the fullness of time, when all things are created and come into perfect shalom. God spends the seventh day of creation enjoying all the richness he created in the first six days-- from tiny microbes to giant sequoias, sea crustaceans to humpback whales. His sabbath rest is deeply connected to his holy work.

The original vocation of humanity, the job given to Adam and Eve by God in Genesis, is to tend to the Garden of Eden and to dwell with God in his Creation, interacting with their fellow created beings as emissaries of the Lord. It is only after the fall that their work becomes wearisome toil: Work in Creation becomes a battle and not a delight. When God first tells the Israelites to take a weekly Sabbath, to honor the seventh day, he is trying to usher his people back into an Eden-like holiness and away from the sin and death of the fall. He is leading them through the desert into the Promised Land and preparing them to live on that land in such a way that his shalom--his peace--returns to them and all his Creation. So, through Moses, he teaches them how to both work in the Promised Land and how to cease working, so they can remember the purpose of their work. The Israelites are to farm and craft and create not for the sake of amassing wealth for their own glory, but for the sake of living into God's first mandate to humans: to be regents over Creation in a way that brings glory to God. They take the seventh day as rest to center all their life in the worship of the Lord who grounds their work. They are to spend the seventh day delighting, feasting, and relishing in all that God has made, and all he is doing through the work of their hands.

One of the reasons we farm here at New Garden Park is to ground our understanding of work in the rhythms of Creation. Work in the 21st century has become so associated with technology, quotas, deadlines, and abstract figures that we forget that all our work is to be grounded in the fostering of life. Farming helps us remember that our first job is to provide nourishment for ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and strangers.

Leah Wall, who directs our Catechesis program for children, sent me this lovely poem by the medieval anchorite, Julian of Norwich (1342-1416):

*Be a gardener.
Dig and ditch,
toil and sweat,
and turn the earth upside down
and seek the deepness
and water the plants in time.
Continue this labor
and make sweet floods to run
and noble and abundant fruits
to spring.
Take this food and drink
and carry it to God
as your true worship.*

This lovely poem begins with the effort of work and ends with sabbath worship. We labor six days a week to produce something beautiful to then take to the Lord on the seventh day as an offer-

ing--to take to him in worship. If we labor seven days a week--if the final three lines of the poem are removed--then the Lord is taken out of the picture and we become god of our work. The work then is only to fill our stomachs or coffers, and has no connection to God's Kingdom. Taking one day a week to cease working does not diminish work: instead it protects our work from perversion or idolatry and allows it to be infused with God's presence and purpose.

In mid-October, we hosted the first sabbath day at the farm. We invited clergy and staff from our parish and diocese to come and spend a day on the land in rest and prayer. We started the day in the St. Phocas Oratory (the Benedictine chapel next to our sanctuary, built by Abbot Dan Nobles), in morning prayer and reflecting on what the sabbath means to us. We then spent the morning interacting with creation, harvesting vegetables, and making flower wreaths. We joined together at noon to celebrate Eucharist as part of a meal made from the fruit of our land (a simple vegetable beef soup with salad), and then spent the afternoon in silent reading, walking, napping or praying. Throughout the day, the air was graced with a sweetness only God can bring as he wooed us into his perfect rest and delight. I work on the land every day, but never have I felt such peace in this place. The act of stopping our labor to steep in God's presence brought creation alive in a remarkable way. It's as if God put his hands on our frantic, motion-filled bodies and said, "Stop. See what I have made and see what you have made through me; say that it is good!"



RESOURCES

We are planning to host more of these sabbath days and open them to parishioners, and we hope that you will join us. But first and foremost, I encourage you to practice sabbath in your weekly rhythm. Here are some resources to help you start your journey with sabbath:

Sabbath, Dan Allender [An incredible book on the practical application of Sabbath in our lives]

Living the Sabbath by Norman Wirzba [Beautifully connects the biblical themes of Sabbath and Creation]

The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics by Ched Myers [Demonstrates how the practice of Sabbath connects to every facet of economy and life in the Bible]

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel [One of the most famous books on the Sabbath, by an esteemed Jewish rabbi and scholar]



The Bible Project Podcast;
"7th Day Rest- Sabbath" Series



When did you learn that your mother was your mother? This is a story you are familiar with – there was, for most of you, never a time that you did not know your mother or her love. You were carried in her womb before you could even breathe on your own. You were born into this world through water and blood and depended on her for nourishment. From her own body, you were fed. You were completely dependent on her for your hygiene, protection, your very life. Now, as an adult, you may still live together or close by; you may see her once or twice a year; you may not speak together, or she may be gone from this earth. But, at some point in this life before today, you came to the knowledge of what it was for her to be your mother.

When did you learn that God is your God? For children who grow up in homes with a Christian parent, there is, most likely, never a time that they do not know God or this great love. They are carried by their families before their faith becomes expressible in word, before they can even say “Our Father.” They are born into the family of God through the water and the blood and depend on God for nourishment. From His own body, they are fed. Apart from God’s grace, there is no health in us. We are completely dependent on God for life.

A true knowing of God--an intimate relationship--is not restricted to an intellectual understanding. We can love before we know fully--before we can quantify, systematize, or express what we know. The trust of a child in their parent--as the trust of a child in their true God--is not ignorance. The abilities we judge to be lacking in this childlike relationship are not essential abilities, necessary for our salvation or genuine love. In fact, it is often in lack or weakness that faith, worship, and love become more vital.

We do not sentimentalize childhood. Instead, believing that the Holy Spirit is at work in the baptized child of God (regardless of age, ability, or any other defining features), we would be failing in true faith if we did not look to what that person has to teach us about who God is. And there are such beauties to childhood, unique to that short season, that we discount and overlook. One of the many strengths of a child is a joy-filled love. In *The Secret of Childhood*, Maria Montessori says:

It is a terrible nuisance when a child goes in to wake up his father and mother in the morning. But what drives a child to go in search of his parents as soon as he gets up if it is not love? When a child bounces from his bed early, at the break of day, he goes to find his still sleeping parents as if to say: ‘Learn to live holily! It is already light! It is morning!’ But a child goes to his parents not to teach them but only to see again those whom he loves.

The room is perhaps still dark, tightly shut, so that the brilliance of day will not disturb the sleepers. The child comes and touches his parents; the father and the mother grumble: ‘How many times have we told you not to come early in the morning to wake us up?’ ‘I did not wake you,’ he replies, ‘I only wanted to give you a kiss.’ In effect he says: ‘I did not wish to wake you from your sleep, I only wanted to arouse your spirit.’

In that call of the child, we can hear the voice of our great Father to us: “I have sent these children to you. They will awaken you to my voice. They will arouse you to the joy of being together.” We may find that we have been asleep, or even in the dark, but let us awaken to the call of the Spirit of God through them. Let us learn what it is to worship in full humility and joy. Let us return to our first love and truest belonging, through faith and grounded in a pure child-like love that surpasses knowledge. In this kind of knowing, you may be filled with a surprising fullness.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to **“know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”** (Ephesians 3: 14-19).

I SAW THAT GOD
NEVER BEGAN TO LOVE US.
FOR JUST AS WE WILL BE
IN EVERLASTING JOY
(ALL GOD’S CREATION IS
DESTINED FOR THIS)
SO ALSO WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN
IN GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE,
KNOWN AND LOVED
FROM WITHOUT BEGINNING.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

THE WORSHIP OF GENEROSITY

by Rev. Alan Hawkins



Technology, especially all that has emerged in the last few years, is really amazing. When I drive to someone's home, I just plug their address into my GPS and put the sound into my speakers for directions: simple, fast, efficient. There are so many things I do on my phone that took hours or physical resources to do before. As we become more and more reliant on technology, it's easy to focus on what is gained by using these tools. But there are many losses as well.

American sociologist Robert K. Merton coined this reality of things gained and things lost as "unintended consequences," "unanticipated consequences" or "unforeseen consequences"—results that are not what we anticipated from purposeful actions or decisions. In the last few years, the financial industry has seen a significant rise in the use of electronic giving mechanisms. Trust me, as a church leader who has to balance ministry and expenditures, the reliable (simple, fast, efficient) giving that comes from electronic forms is preferred. But what we knew would be easier and more convenient has also resulted in some "unanticipated consequences." Namely, we have lost our sense of gratitude and of giving as an act of worship. Instead, giving has become perfunctory, or worse: just the leverage wheel for our particular causes.

Though technology has seemed to make it so, generosity is never convenient. Generosity is not a matter of ease and convenience, but a form of worship, for Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Our things, loves, and causes have a way of eliciting our love and generosity. As American theologian and speaker James K. A. Smith once wrote, "Jesus is a teacher who doesn't just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn't content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; he is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, your longings" (You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit). Our habits of generosity inform and shape our loves. We truly are loving beings not just thinking beings, and habits actually have far more power in forming us than even our ideas.

The offering at church is a personal and tangible opportunity (also, a habit) to worship the Lord with our checkbook. This is a symbolic act of worshiping God with our whole life. When we make our offering in church, we are saying "I love you more than my stuff, my causes, my idols." There is a part of the older prayer book [1662] which has recently been brought back into our new one: after the offering of bread and wine (called "oblations") the celebrant leading communion says "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory,

and the victory, and the majesty: for everything in heaven and on earth is yours; yours is the Kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as Head above all. All things come from you, O Lord" (1 Chronicles 29:11, 14). The people say in response: "And of your own have we given you." That phrase—a small set of words containing a profound and powerful depth of meaning. A modern translation goes this way:

Everything comes from you; all we're doing is giving back what we've been given from your generous hand. As far as you're concerned, we're homeless, shiftless wanderers like our ancestors, our lives mere shadows, hardly anything to us. God, our God, all these materials—these piles of stuff for building a house of worship for you, honoring your Holy Name—it all came from you! It was all yours in the first place! I know, dear God, that you care nothing for the surface—you want us, our true selves—and so I have given from the heart, honestly and happily. And now see all these people doing the same, giving freely, willingly—what a joy! (1 Chronicles 29:11,14; The Message)

The great and mysterious philosopher Soren Kierkegaard tells a parable of a Father who gives his children money and they use the money to purchase a gift that they then give to their father. This is a picture of our acts of generosity. It is all God's money, and when we give back to God with what he has already given ("And of your own have we given you"), he gladly receives our gifts with the love and pride of a father: they demonstrate our love for him.

The act of generosity is a form of worship because it reveals what you think, believe, and feel about your physical belongings and financial earnings.

In our weekly service of communion, there is an offering. Baskets made in Rwanda as a gift to us are passed around. This part of the service is not a break from worship but a part of it—a tangible participation. In other words, our act of generosity is summarized in the offerings we make. I know that we make far more offerings and gifts of generosity than what is dropped in an offering basket, and contrarily, I know it is just as easy to drop money in an offering basket and still not have a spirit of generosity, but wherever and however it is done, giving is nevertheless a summary act. The offering portion of our worship service is not superfluous. We could pragmatically just encourage our people to give electronically (51% do) and eliminate this time of worship altogether, but we would lose a vital symbolical and expressive act reminding us that God is a generous god and we are a generous people because of the gospel. It is a historic act, a biblical act, and a necessary act, and a beautiful expression of worship.



why lament in worship ?

Lament is quite common in the Bible, but somehow often missing from the modern worship service. To lament is to express sorrow to God and ask hard questions in the face of trial. Most of our Biblical heroes lamented—some openly, some in private. Perhaps as churches have moved from a more traditional setting to a contemporary one, some parts of the service have gone by the wayside to create a more upbeat experience: essentially, problems are for the rest of the week while Sunday is reserved for escape. However, lament has an important place in worship, and it needs to be reincorporated as a consistent part of the gathering of the Church.

Lament helps us to bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:2 is clear: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Everyone is bearing a burden of some sort, even if we aren't able to recognize it in the moment. I can guarantee that there are plenty of brothers and sis-

ters in our churches who are burdened and need to be comforted, sung forward, and held up to God in corporate worship. It's an important part of loving our neighbor. Making a corporate petition to the Lord is one of the things that we should be doing in church for others as well as for ourselves.

Lament allows us to be comforted.

Who but the Lord is our Comforter? Job's friends are pretty lousy ones (Job 16:1-2), and only when God Himself shows up does Job receive the vindication and comfort he desires. The psalms frequently seek comfort through lament (Psalms 3, 4, 10, 16, 17...). Part of the process of bearing one another's burdens is comforting those who are afflicted. As the body of Christ, singing a song together or pleading for godly comfort in affliction can give words to steer the afflicted towards healing. The saying is true that "misery loves company." The feeling of not being alone in grief is a beautiful starting place for building courage and perspective.

Lament requires vulnerability and this leads into experiencing intimacy with God.

Some of us need a little help with directing our petitions in a healthy, honest way. Songs of lament can help to open that door. When words fail to come to the mouth of the afflicted, scriptural lament can become the words of expression they were seeking. What better model of lament do we have than Scripture itself? The truth of God's Word can bring us to a place of honesty with ourselves. Through it, we are invited to question, doubt, fear, and express anger and sorrow. We serve a God who delights to hear us and, in turn, responds to us through His Word.

Lament helps us to identify with the character of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

As Isaiah 53:3 says, "He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." Jesus experienced everything we experience, though without sin.

When we are given a chance to lament like he lamented, our hearts are shaped more into His image by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this process, we are able to identify with other broken people in this broken world. The beauty of the personhood of Jesus is that He can identify with us. Modeling His life, in turn, is to be acquainted with grief for the sake of others and our own sanctification.

Lament offers an opportunity for honest confession of our sins to God. Some of our reasons for lament are because of our own doing. David lamented and pleaded with God over his sin with Bathsheba. In Psalm 51, he urges the Lord to purge and clean him so he can rejoice again. Our own sinfulness can keep us from being honest with ourselves, God, and others. Lament in worship can give us a chance to reflect on our sinfulness in a beautiful way, and apply our hearts to a sung petition. Even David says in Psalm 32:3 “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.”

Lament can lead to healing. Lament can open our wounds to allow God

into those deep places. We are only truly free when we are being honest with ourselves, God, and our community. We have limits, and in humility we need to ask God for healing and allow him to bind up our wounds. When we sing lament corporately, we create space for everyone to allow God to do this miraculous work.

Lament causes us to remember God’s goodness. When we reach a moment of helplessness and we turn to lament, we, like David, remember and remind the Lord of His promises and goodness toward us. He will not go back on His promises and He will never cease to be good: we cling to those truths to steady our hearts. Psalm 13:5-6 is a great example of the shift from complaint to trust: “But I have trusted in Your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.”

Through lament, we can recover joy. We cannot find joy without God (Ecclesiastes 2:23-26), for life on this earth is toil and hardship, and without Him, it is meaningless. Jesus says beautifully: “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see

you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22). Jesus says this before his crucifixion to comfort the hearts of His disciples. In lament, we are in touch with the true joy that is found in knowing that Jesus has the victory over this fallen world and our sufferings are only for a time. Without true sorrow, joy cannot take its proper place. Without the depths of grief, we don’t feel the triumph of the Resurrection.

Lament has the power to shape us into God’s image. As the Body of Christ, in corporate worship, lament can provide an opportunity to be tightly knit together in unity as Christ’s bride. Corporate lament can be an act of waiting patiently for the Lord in our sufferings: “...but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:19-26).

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BAZELEL: IN THE SHADOW OF GOD

by MacEntyre “Mac” Allen

Some years ago (never mind how long precisely) having little or no money in my wallet and nothing in particular to interest me ashore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. That was the beginning of many endeavors that taught me how to do things. Many of the skills I picked up are still useful, like carpentry and engine maintenance. Some--caulking wooden sailing vessels, programming in the Forth language, mousing shackles--are seldom in demand. Recently, Alan Hawkins joked that folks like to call me McGyver after that clever fellow on the old TV show, because I can do many things. When I spoke with him about work as worship, he reminded me of another man and another story: Bezalel, who was chosen by God himself to build the Tabernacle and everything in it.

In Exodus 25-31, God gave His Law to the people when he called Moses to Mount Sinai. He then provided detailed instructions on how to build the Tabernacle and its fine contents. He even pointed out to Moses who among His people had the skills to accomplish this formidable task:

See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you... (Exodus 31:2-6)

Bezalel and Oholiab were inspired by God's Spirit to teach many others who had been given skills by God. Under the leadership of these two young men, the Tabernacle was completed. Bezalel, whose name means “in the shadow,” made many fine things for the Tabernacle, including the Ark and the complex candlestick. Moses

was so impressed with Bezalel, he said that, true to his name, Bezalel had dwelt “in the very shadow of God,” meaning Bezalel was very close to God. Bezalel’s name could also mean that his work was on behalf of God, behind the scenes or “in the shadow.” In other words, all the glory for the labor and skill goes to God.

Several times, I have heard pastors contrast “self-sufficiency” with dependence upon the Lord. I have heard the term “rugged individual” used to describe those who resist putting their lives in His hands. This idea has bothered me because talents are a gift from God and when exercised, will inevitably lead to some amount of confidence, strength, and self-support. How does becoming self-sufficient by developing your God-given talents keep one from also being dependent upon Christ?

I believe the answer is in how these talents are used. Becoming self-sufficient is not simply developing your skills so that you can avoid dependency upon others. Rather, the more you develop your skills, the more God can use you for his purposes. In the same way, becoming dependent upon Jesus does not diminish your self-sufficiency. One who is both dependent upon Jesus and self-sufficient is someone who, like Bezalel, can make themselves available to do great things for the Kingdom of God.

Bezalel was a grand nephew of Moses. God told Moses that he had selected Bezalel to take the lead in building the Tabernacle, and it was Moses who then told the young man, a teen at the time. Early in life, Bezalel developed his skills, made himself available and was chosen for God’s purposes. Making things that glorify God was Bezalel’s way of worshiping God.

Some years ago (never mind how long precisely) I was driving from Greensboro to Raleigh on Interstate 85. As I approached exit 147, a light rain began to fall. I saw the right rear tire of the car in front of me blow out. The Holy Spirit did not wait for me to think. The car in front of me pulled over, and I pulled over behind them.

An elderly man got out of the passenger seat. I told him I would be happy to change the tire, and suggested that he sit in the car. Before the rain dampened my shirt, the job was done. The man's wife, who was driving, lowered the window to thank me. She asked me why I had stopped. I told her I knew I could help. I could not express the real reason until later in my life. She pushed a \$20 bill out the window, but before she could raise it, I pushed the money back in and wished them well.

Using even the simplest of skills to help others brings glory to God. Anyone can learn to change tires and light bulbs. Who doesn't appreciate a good cook? When you learn how to use a multimeter and do simple wiring, it can transform your life and the lives of others! Developing your skills will bring benefit to you first, then you will find God opening doors for its use in building his Kingdom.

One approach to developing skills is to acquire tools and learn to use them. They say that when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail, so get a screwdriver and a wrench as well. Whatever tool you are most inclined to use--hammer, paint brush, keyboard, trowel, pen--what is needed to develop that talent is a place to begin, intention, and practice. An advantage to being part of our community of believers is that it's a great resource for finding mentorship in a host of skills and talents. And practice? There's always service to be done for the kingdom, both big and small. Habitat for Humanity is an excellent way to accelerate your learning. So is our own Umaganda Day, once a month at New Garden Park. Practical skill is a great place to start if you feel at a loss in identifying your own talents. Pick up a shovel and fall into step with the work being done.



God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. I have heard people say that they wish they had a talent for this or for that. It seems to me that folks say they lack talent when what they mean is that they are not good enough to be a star quarterback. In the sports world, skill is measured by comparison to others. Not so in God's Kingdom. Jesus selected his apostles from among ordinary men. There wasn't a star quarterback among them. Remember what God told Moses: "And I have given to all able men ability..." We are the body of God (think physically, not abstractly), equipped to do our part in making the Body function well. He has given us talents and skills and we worship him in stewarding them to the best of our ability, and then returning them to him along with what they've accomplished. His mission is our mission, and we are his hands and feet at work in his service. May we be confident, strong, determined, tireless, and capable.





IRRIGATING THE NEW JERUSALEM

by Dr. Nathan Hedman

I used to hate summer. As the school year wound down and the sun warmed up, my friends looked out class windows imagining vacations to the mountains, or summer passes to Wild Waves theme park. Not so in the Hedman house. My dad owned a landscape and irrigation company, so the day after school closed, I knew I'd be digging ditches for irrigation pipe. "Can I just have a couple of days before I start?" I asked my dad once. "What would you do?" he wondered. I knew better than to answer that.

Worse, my older brother was the foreman, so I had to take orders from him day in and day out. Whenever the gas-powered ditch-digger hit a snarl of roots or rocks, that was my cue to get in there and do what the machine couldn't. My little noodle body would grab a pick, sometimes an axe, maybe a mattock, then back to the shovel. Over and over, day after day. There was little pleasure in it. I remember admonishing myself never to look at the truck clock because it always disappointed. I pretended to drink Cokes I didn't have in the lousy lunches I packed. The summer slogged on and on and on until "Back-to-school!" ads tickled my ears that it was all coming to a close. Only a few years back did I realize that all of this might have something to do with my career as a professor: a job where school is, in a sense, always in session.

Retrospectively, I wouldn't trade those summers for anything. It taught me just about everything I know about hard work and the genuine pleasure of leisure. But here's what I never learned: why we work. Nobody ever seemed to have an answer to that besides "it builds character," or "so that you don't depend on others." But the beginning of the Christian story has a very different answer. In the garden, we see a working God (unique to early religious traditions) not only creating a world, but planting a garden, making man out of the soil, woman out of a rib, etc. More, he commends man and woman to begin where he left off: naming animals, tending the garden, and subduing all of creation. That's remarkable. Before he says anything about worshiping or praying to him, or even building a sanctuary, God says simply: "get to work."

Theologians call this the "cultural mandate." The God of the cosmos asks his representatives on earth—man and woman—to name, tame,

and build something out of the very wild and "very good" creation he has made. And he asks them to do that to the very ends of the earth. The philosopher Albert Wolters summarizes this well:

The earth had been completely unformed and empty; in the six-day process of development God had formed it and filled it—but not completely. People must now carry on the work of development. Mankind, as God's representatives on earth, carry on where God left off. But this now to be a human development of the earth. From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature, in a single word, the task ahead is civilization (*Creation Regained*, 1985).

Christians typically forget that God's first priority was that His people would manage the world's development to the ends of the earth. But the claim is even stronger than that: as far as we can tell from the immediate context of Genesis 1 and 2, to be made in God's "image and likeness" is precisely to be a worker and ruler of creation like him. That's it. We are most exemplifying our God-given likeness when we work.

We forget all of this because of the disaster of Genesis 3. The consequences of the fall are so total that they infect every corner of our lives. Work, once the hallmark of our God-given identity, is now cursed as "toil." The earth too is cursed; it won't easily give up its treasure, not without the sweat of the brow, anyway. That's what I was feeling all those hot summer afternoons of long ago: "toil." Maybe you feel it, too, every morning when the alarm clock goes off without fail.

But even more devastating: we were exiled from the presence of God. The world we now live in is so rife with evil, we forget we were ever supposed to take its cultural development seriously. Our task now, in light of Genesis 3, is to share Jesus' love and stave off the darkest evil until the world runs down. Ordinary work takes a backseat, especially work that doesn't immediately contribute to the saving of souls or defense of justice.

Given this new urgency, no wonder so much of our work feels like such a big waste. The 9-to-5 becomes, at best, a cover for sharing the gospel; at worse, we're just biding our time until we're called home.

But that's not how God sees it. If we turn to the last two chapters of scripture (Revelation 21 and 22), we see a remarkable thing: The Lamb of God is now presiding over the New Heaven and the New Earth, but look what's coming! All the pagan kings of the earth are coming into the New Jerusalem with the "wealth of the nations" in tow. What does that phrase mean, exactly? John is pulling a motif from the prophets where the world's goods, now subject to the rule of Christ, are being shipped into the New Jerusalem to bring glory to God. Isaiah 60 gives us a representative list of this wealth—camels, rams, sheep, silver and gold, packed into the ships of Tarshish (themselves symbols of commercial sea power.) These are the products of pagan hands with pagan intent now drawn into the ambit of God's glory and power. It isn't all burned up—quite the opposite. Like all the rest of the created order ("groaning" for redemption, Paul says in Romans 8), the work of human hands seems to have undergone a remarkable transformation—"swords beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4)—that they are now worthy of admittance into the New Heavens and New Earth.

This is surprising, but it shouldn't be. The cultural mandate given to us at the start ("fill the earth and subdue it," Genesis 1:28), now finally realized in the Garden-City of God, was humming underneath all along. The task of saving souls—an essential task after Genesis 3—didn't erase the cultural mandate; it became interlocked with it. Now the sons and daughters of God from all tribes, tongues, and nations are enjoying the work of their hands in the New Heaven and New Earth as

God had originally intended. God gets the world He asked for, broken and now redeemed.

When Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 are reasserted as the framing bookends of our story, we find that work—difficult, tiring, inspiring, and satisfying—is revitalized as central to the vision God has for his flourishing beings. Why else would the Psalmist cry out to God to "establish the work of our hands for us—yes, established the work of our hands" (Psalm 90:17) unless he understood that all manner of good work, with God's help, would last? Let us set aside for good the idea that our work doesn't really matter to God. All scriptural evidence is to the contrary. Might it be that the product of my young calloused hands all those summers ago will be irrigating the New Jerusalem? That's a vision of work I can get excited about.

further exploration

The best overview of this fresh theological vision of work is Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

For a short, close study of work in scripture, I suggest R. Paul Stevens' *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture*

Faith & Co., a 14-part documentary series produced by Seattle Pacific University, powerfully relates stories about our work and faith in a contemporary context. View them for free at <https://faithandco.spu.edu/>

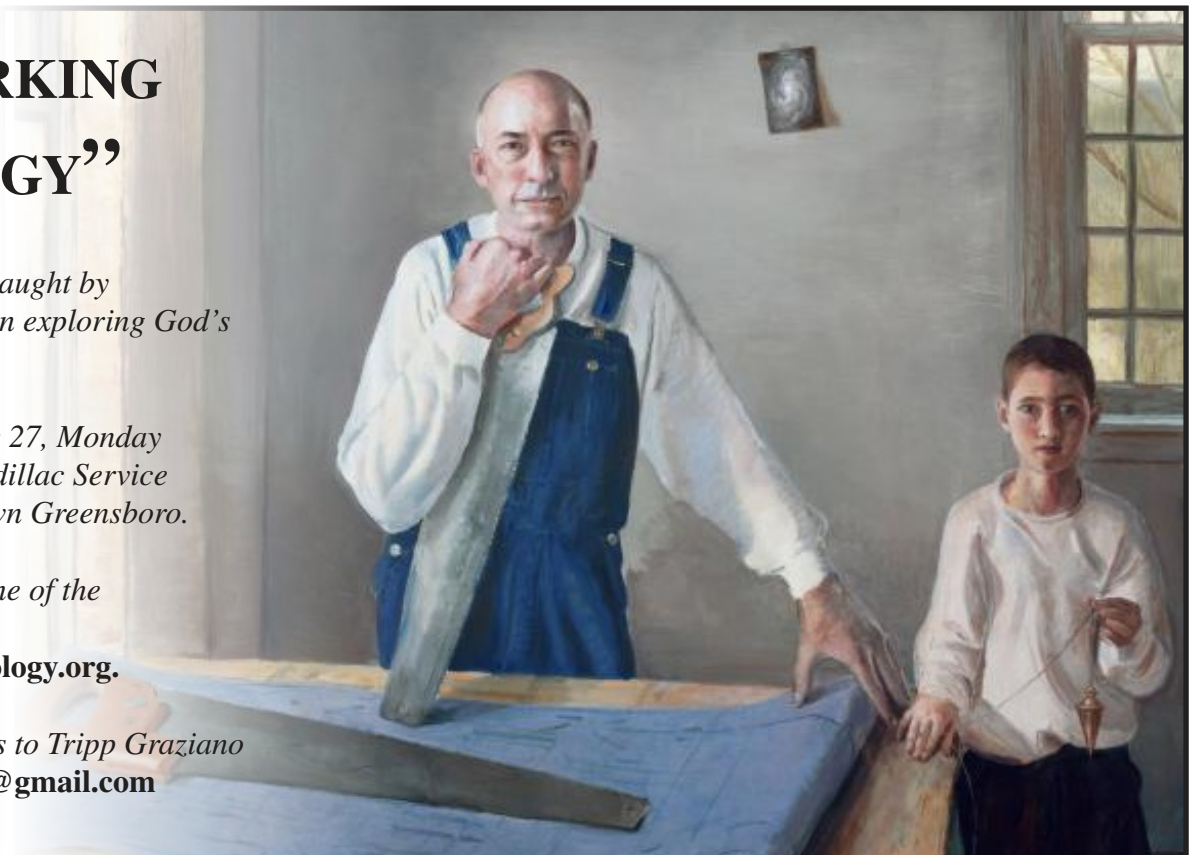
“A WORKING THEOLOGY”

A 10-week course taught by Dr. Nathan Hedman exploring God's plan for our work.

Beginning January 27, Monday evenings at the Cadillac Service Garage in downtown Greensboro.

Register now for one of the limited slots at www.workingtheology.org.

Direct all questions to Tripp Graziano at tripp.graziano@gmail.com



NOTABLE EVENTS

January 11 // Umuganda Day

January 12 // New Garden Next
Campaign Kickoff & Chili Cookoff

January 19 // Annual
Membership Meeting

February 1 // Umuganda Day

February 13-15 // SE Regional Retreat
hosted at Church of the Redeemer

February 26 // Ash Wednesday

February 28-March 1 // Youth
Confirmation Retreat

March 7 // Umuganda Day

March 29 // Booyah Spring Fling

For more information or to sign up
for events, visit
redeemergso.org/events

A WORD ABOUT REGIONAL RETREAT

I attended our Regional Retreat for the first time in February 2019. After the first day, my primary thought was “Why are there not more people coming to this?” The Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) as an institution is relatively young, as is our diocese (Diocese of Christ Our Hope). Even though regional retreats have been happening for several years, it doesn’t seem that the word has gotten out yet about what they are, or why they should be attended.

Regional retreats are a beautiful picture of our Anglican family, and an encouragement to us regarding the broader scope of our faith. Our diocese is divided into three regions, and we are a part of the Southeast Region (North Carolina and coastal Virginia). At these retreats, we get to hear from speakers, attend breakout sessions where we collaborate and share ideas, and worship together as a family of believers. We are able to hear from the bishop about the work that our diocese is doing, and how God is working through our Anglican brothers and sisters. I left the retreat in February feeling much more connected to the Anglican church and its common mission in the world, and excited about new ideas for our local body’s ministries.

We get to host the 2020 Regional Retreat in February. Even if you just attend one talk, a specific breakout session, or the worship service Friday evening, you will get to witness God at work in a powerful way through his Church.

Reflection by Jessie Meriwether

Regional Retreats are a great way for people from each region to get involved with the life of the Diocese. Attendees experience an address from the Bishop, as well as teachings, workshops, and breakout sessions centered on the theological focus of the Diocese for the year. This year, that focus is the missional nature of worship. In addition to all of this, Regional retreats are an opportunity to connect with other people from around the Diocese to build community and unity. Registration is now open at <https://www.adhope.org/2020-regional-retreats>.

REEL WORLD REVIEW

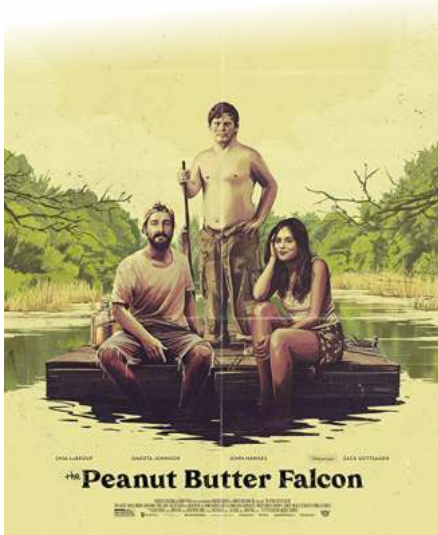
by Mikey Fissel



Reel World Theology

It is our hope that by examining the entertainment that is prevalent in our culture, we may better understand and engage the narratives that are shaping it, being aware that story is powerful and entertainment is not mindless.

THE *PEANUT BUTTER FALCON* is a film that gained quite the following during the second half of 2019. Once you actually take the advice of your friend who caught



this film in theaters and see it for yourself, you'll likely understand why people are championing this feel-good film.

The film opens with Zak, a young adult with down syndrome, who we learn has been relegated to an elder care home because he has no other family willing to take custody of him. Frustrated by this, Zak seeks to escape the sympathetic and well-meaning staff to pursue his dream of becoming a famous professional wrestler.

If that was the end of the premise, then we'd already have enough for a thoughtful film, but (spoilers!) Zak eventually does escape and is befriended by Tyler, played magnificently by Shia LaBeouf--a wayward coastal resident who is running from both grief and the consequences of his anger. Together, they race through (what is advertised as) the Outer Banks of North

Carolina towards what they hope will be new lives (in Zak's case, wrestling glory!).

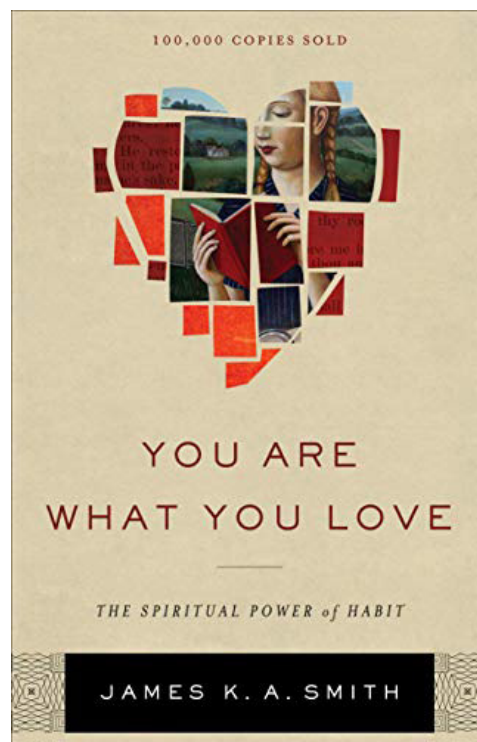
Like most films about a journey, what our characters learn and teach each other along the way is the real meat of the film. As we watch our protagonists struggle with the obstacles in their path, we learn that one cannot simply take a person at face value, and that it often takes walking across a swamp or wading across a river in their shoes before their value is truly realized.

The Peanut Butter Falcon is encouraging, inspiring, and hopeful. It manages to coast effortlessly between endearing drama and light-hearted comedy. While not for the entire family due to some intense moments, the end result is rewarding enough to inspire you to join the ranks of those championing this indie film.

You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit by James K. A. Smith

IN *YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE* by James K. A. Smith, readers have an intellectually stimulating, yet satisfyingly accessible, entrance into the conversation of Christian liturgy and worship. Drawing on great minds such as Augustine and Aristotle, Smith brings to the forefront the notion that humans are more than just thinking beings; rather, we are more accurately loving beings. That is, Smith argues that humans are compelled to a greater degree by our deepest, most visceral desires than pithy factoids or ideologies that we might pick up in any church bible study.

You Are What You Love is a call to broaden the imagination about the things which may be considered proper Christian formation (catechesis), and it makes the case for cultivating spiritual disciplines. Smith claims that it is imperative for contemporary communities of faith to not simply have the eyes to see the liturgies of common life, but



THE BOOK NOOK

also to take the initiative to cultivate, refine, and practice them. In other words, catechesis is not just a tussle for the mind, but a contest for the heart. It seems the wider culture is just as in tune as the Christian community with this place of desire in the human experience, perhaps at times even more so.

If you enjoy *You Are What You Love*, you may also like Tish Harrison Warren's *Liturgy of the Ordinary* which has also added meaningfully to the contemporary conversation of Christian worship. Otherwise, you may want to read Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom*--a more technical exploration of these same concepts. Ultimately, *You Are What You Love* is a welcome piece of literature that brings to bear the fact that all of life is sacred and it would behoove us as a worshiping body to see it as so.

reviewed by Tony Nguyen



Church of the Redeemer

New
Garden
Park

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