***Naming Our Fears: Help from the Psalms***

***Taize Worship Service***

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***NPMC, March 17, 2019***

### Reading #1 (Val)

### Psalm 55:1-11, 16-22

1Give ear to my prayer, O God;  
    do not hide yourself from my supplication.  
2Attend to me, and answer me;  
    I am troubled in my complaint.  
I am distraught 3by the noise of the enemy,  
    because of the clamor of the wicked.  
For they bring trouble upon me,  
    and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

4My heart is in anguish within me,  
    the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
5Fear and trembling come upon me,  
    and horror overwhelms me.  
6And I say, “O that I had wings like a dove!  
    I would fly away and be at rest;  
7truly, I would flee far away;  
    I would lodge in the wilderness;  
8I would hurry to find a shelter for myself  
    from the raging wind and tempest.”

9Confuse, O Lord, confound their speech;  
    for I see violence and strife in the city.  
10Day and night they go around it  
    on its walls,  
and iniquity and trouble are within it;  
11    ruin is in its midst;  
oppression and fraud  
    do not depart from its marketplace.

16But I call upon God,  
    and the Lord will save me.  
17Evening and morning and at noon  
    I utter my complaint and moan,  
    and he will hear my voice.  
18He will redeem me unharmed  
    from the battle that I wage,  
    for many are arrayed against me.  
19God, who is enthroned from of old,  
    will hear, and will humble them—  
because they do not change,  
    and do not fear God.

20My companion laid hands on a friend  
    and violated a covenant with me  
21with speech smoother than butter,  
    but with a heart set on war;  
with words that were softer than oil,  
    but in fact were drawn swords.

22Cast your burden on the Lord,  
    and he will sustain you;  
he will never permit  
    the righteous to be moved.

**Reading #2 (Edna)**

“It is no wonder that the church has intuitively avoided these psalms [of despair or disorientation.] They lead us into dangerous acknowledgment of how life really is. They lead us into the presence of God where everything is not polite and civil. They cause us to think unthinkable thoughts and utter unutterable words. Perhaps worst, they lead us away from the comfortable religious claims of ‘modernity’ in which everything is managed and controlled. In our modern experience, but probably also in every successful and affluent culture, it is believed that enough power and knowledge can tame the terror and eliminate the darkness. . . . But our honest experience, both personal and public, attests to the resilience of the darkness, in spite of us. The remarkable thing about [ancient] Israel is that they did not banish or deny the darkness from its religious enterprise. It embraces the darkness as the very stuff of new life. Indeed, Israel seems to know that new life is rooted nowhere else.” (Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*, p. 29)

**Reading #3 (Edna)**

**Beloved Is Where We Begin**

If you would enter  
into the wilderness,  
do not begin  
without a blessing.

Do not leave  
without hearing  
who you are:  
Beloved,  
named by the One  
who has traveled this path  
before you.

Do not go  
without letting it echo  
in your ears,  
and if you find  
it is hard  
to let it into your heart,  
do not despair.  
That is what  
this journey is for.

I cannot promise  
this blessing will free you  
from danger,  
from fear,  
from hunger  
or thirst,  
from the scorching  
of sun  
or the fall  
of the night.

But I can tell you  
that on this path  
there will be help.

I can tell you  
that on this way  
there will be rest.

I can tell you  
that you will know  
the strange graces  
that come to our aid  
only on a road  
such as this,  
that fly to meet us  
bearing comfort  
and strength,  
that come alongside us  
for no other cause  
than to lean themselves  
toward our ear  
and with their  
curious insistence  
whisper our name:

Beloved.  
Beloved.  
Beloved. (Jan Richardson, Circle of Grace, p. 96-98)

**Reading #4 (Val)**

“Why are you so fearful? Jesus asks [in Mark 4]. Why do you not have faith? Having faith does not mean we no longer feel fear. We do not simply stop being afraid. That would be a very naïve view of faith and one that disregards the nature of the human soul, which cannot be so neatly manipulated. I think that most people in our society deal with fear as they have been taught to deal with it. They use a kind of evasive strategy. They avoid fear; they do not admit they feel it; they pretend to be strong . . . . [But] we know from the Gospels that [even Jesus] sweated blood and wept tears. … The fear Jesus felt was a fear of separation, too. Think of the Psalm he prayed at his death: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The fear of being abandoned by God is the most profound fear of separation we can feel. But everything we experience of sin, too, is fear of being separated from each other by guilt. In sin, we separate ourselves from others by dominating or exploiting them, and we then live separated from them.” (Dorothee Soelle, *The Strength of the Weak*, p. 148-150).

**Reading #5 (Val)**

### Psalm 27

### 1The Lord is my light and my salvation;     whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life;     of whom shall I be afraid?

2When evildoers assail me  
    to devour my flesh—  
my adversaries and foes—  
    they shall stumble and fall.

3Though an army encamp against me,  
    my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me,  
    yet I will be confident.

4One thing I asked of the Lord,  
    that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the Lord  
    all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
    and to inquire in his temple.

5For he will hide me in his shelter  
    in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
    he will set me high on a rock.

6Now my head is lifted up  
    above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
    sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

7Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,  
    be gracious to me and answer me!  
8“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”  
    Your face, Lord, do I seek.  
9    Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,  
    you who have been my help.  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
    O God of my salvation!  
10If my father and mother forsake me,  
    the Lord will take me up.

11Teach me your way, O Lord,  
    and lead me on a level path  
    because of my enemies.  
12Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,  
    for false witnesses have risen against me,  
    and they are breathing out violence.

13I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
    in the land of the living.  
14Wait for the Lord;  
    be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
    wait for the Lord!

**Reading #6 (Edna)**

“Why do we not have the strength to overcome fear, to overcome all our fears of separation by not hiding them but transforming them into something else that tells us we are not isolated and alone? God tells us: You are not alone; you are never alone; even in death you are not alone; you are never cut off from the flow of love; once you have entered this flow, once you have been touched by it, you cannot ever be isolated again; there is no such thing as separation from God. God is with us and will always be with us. [God] will infuse us with this flow of love so that we can never forget [God’s] love. Why are you so afraid? Why do you not have faith? Faith . . . accepts fear. It does not repress fear. It admits the existence of fear, but it does not leave fear untouched. It transforms fear. . . [F]aith tells us, we can transform fear. We can make a sword into a plowshare. . . . A church is a place where we can speak freely, that is, a place where we can speak without fear. We can rechannel our fear. We can redirect the great energy that our fears drain from us. We can use it to different ends. We can free ourselves from compulsive preoccupation with our fears. We can make a productive force out of them, an instrument of peace and justice. Blessed are those who feel fear; they shall create peace.” (Dorothee Soelle, *The Strength of the Weak*, p. 150-152).

**Reading #7 (Val)**

**Psalm 46**

1God is our refuge and strength,  
    a very present help in trouble.  
2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
    though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
3though its waters roar and foam,  
    though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
    the holy habitation of the Most High.  
5God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
    God will help it when the morning dawns.  
6The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
    he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
7The Lord of hosts is with us;  
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.

8Come, behold the works of the Lord;  
    see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
9He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
    he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
    he burns the shields with fire.  
10“Be still, and know that I am God!  
    I am exalted among the nations,  
    I am exalted in the earth.”  
11The Lord of hosts is with us;  
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.