

Sam Shoemaker Community / Recovery Lectio / Lent Week 1 “Ash Wednesday”

- ***The Recovery Reading* is a transcript of Bill Wilson’s First World War spiritual experience in Winchester Cathedral.**

In Winchester there came another illuminating experience. I remember wandering in the graveyard and came across a headstone of someone called Thomas Thatcher, perhaps an ancestor of my good friend Ebby. ... Here's the epitaph:

*Here lies a Hampshire grenadier
Who caught his death drinking cold small beer
A good soldier is ne'er forgot
Whether he dies by musket or by pot*

I walked inside the cathedral and there was a company of soldiers there, some of them pretty tough looking specimens, and all were very much subdued by the atmosphere of that place. ...

I thought of wounds, I thought of suffering, I thought of death, even of oblivion; and then my mood veered sharply about as the atmosphere of the place began to possess me and I was lifted up in a sort of ecstasy.... and though I was not a conscious believer in God at the time, yet I somehow had a mighty assurance that things were and would be all right....

The notion of God kept crossing my mind, in the sense of some sort of sustaining presence in that place was quite overpowering.

I didn't define it, but it was a valid spiritual experience, and it had the classic mechanism: collapsed human powerlessness, then God coming to man to lift him up to set him on the High Road to his destiny. Those were my impressions of my experience in the cathedral.

- ***Meditation Hymn: The Old Churchyard***

by Pauline Scanlon

Come, come with me to the old churchyard, / I so well know the paths 'neath the soft green sward.
Friends in there that we once did regard; / We can trace out their names in the old churchyard.

Mourn not for them, for their trials are o'er, / Why weep for those who will weep no more?
For sweet is their sleep, though cold and hard / Their pillows lay deep in the old churchyard.

I know that it's vain when our friends depart / To breathe kind words to a broken heart;
And I know that the joy of life is marred / When we follow our friends to the old churchyard.

But were I at rest 'neath the yonder tree, / Why would you weep, my friends, for me?
I'm so wayworn, why would you retard / The peace that I seek in the old churchyard?

Why weep for me, for I'm ready to go / To that haven of rest where no tears there flow;
And I fear not to enter that dark lonely tomb / Where our Savior has lain and conquered the gloom.

I rest in the hope that one bright day / Sunshine will burst through this prison of clay,
And Gabriel's trumpet and the voice of the Lord / Will wake up the dead in the old churchyard.

+ Imposition of Ashes: Using ashes from the fire or soil mixed with olive oil, make the sign of the cross on your forehead while the following words are read:

Leader: Remember that we are dust

Responder: And to dust we will return

(Minute of silence / ringing the bell)

- **Lectio:** (We will read the Lectio only once – Following 2 minutes of silence those wishing to may respond “*This Lent I believe God is guiding me to*”)

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

- **Psalm 24**

The earth belongs to the Lord ***and everything on it is his.**

For he founded it in empty space, ***and breathed his own life breath into it.**

He has filled it with manifold creatures ***each one precious in his sight**

Who is fit to hold power? ***Who is worthy to act in God's place?**

Those with a passion for truth; ***who are horrified by injustice.**

Who act with mercy to the poor, ***and take up the cause of the helpless**

Who have let go of selfish concerns. ***and see the whole earth as sacred.**

Their strength is in their compassion; ***God's light shines through their hearts.**

Their children's children will bless them, ***and the work of their hands will endure.**

- **Closing Hymn: "Precious Lord"**

by The Blind Boys of Alabama

Precious, Lord, take my hand / And lead me on, let me stand

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn

Through the storm, through the night / Lead me on to the light

Precious, Lord, take my hand / Lead me home

When the night grows so dreary / Precious Lord, draw, draw me nearer

I am tired, I am weak, and I'm so worn / And at the river, Lord, I stand

Guide my feet, and hold my hand / Precious Lord, take my hand

And lead! Lead me home! Lead me home! Lead me home!

Sam Shoemaker Community / Recovery Lectio Born Again from the Spirit / Lent Two

- ***Recovery Reading: (Taken from Thomas Merton's New Seeds of Contemplation)***

Contemplation is not and cannot be a function of the external self.

There is an irreducible opposition between the deep transcendent self that awakens only in contemplation, and the superficial, external self which we commonly identify with the first person singular.

We must remember that this superficial "I" is not our real self.

It is our "individuality" and our "empirical" self, but it is not truly the hidden and mysterious person in whom we subsist before the eyes of God.

The "I" that works in the world, thinks about itself, observes its own reactions, and talks about itself is not the true "I" that has been united to God in Christ.

It is at best the vesture, the mask, the disguise of that mysterious and unknown "self" whom most of us never discover until we are dead.

Our external, superficial, self is not eternal, not spiritual. *Far from it.*

This self is doomed to disappear as completely as smoke from a chimney.

It is utterly frail and effervescent.

Contemplation is precisely the awareness that this "I" is really "not I" and the awakening of the unknown "I" that is beyond observation and reflection and is incapable of commenting upon itself....

It is not we who choose to awaken ourselves, but God who chooses to awaken us.

- ***Meditation Hymn: "Show Me the Place"***

by Leonard Cohen

Show me the place / Where you want your slave to go

Show me the place / I've forgotten, I don't know

Show me the place / For my head is bending low

Show me the place / Where you want your slave to go

Show me the place / Help me roll away the stone

Show me the place / I can't move this thing alone

Show me the place / Where the Word became a man

Show me the place / Where the suffering began

The troubles came / I saved what I could save

A thread of light / A particle / A wave

But there were chains / So I hastened to behave

There were chains / So I loved you like a slave

- ***Lectio***

(Jesus said) Unless you are born through water and the spirit you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the spirit is spirit.

Do not be surprised when I say you must be born from above.

The wind blows wherever it pleases.

**You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
That is how it is with all who are born of the spirit.**

• ***Psalm 104 (Modern version)***

Unnamable God, you are fathomless / **I praise you with endless awe**
You are wrapped in light like a cloak / **You stretch out the sky like a curtain**
You use the wind as your messengers / **Thunder and lightning as your servants**
You look at the earth it trembles / **You touch the hills and they smoke**
You make grass grow for the cattle / **And grains for the service of mankind**
You bring forth food from the earth / **And bread that strengthens the body**
Oil that makes the face shine / **And wine that gladdens the heart**

All these depend on you / **To give them food in due time**
Your hands open / **They gather it**
You give it / **They are filled with gladness**
You hide your face / **They are stricken**
You take back their breath, they die / **And return their bodies to the dust**
You send forth your breath they are born / **And with them you replenish the earth**

I will sing to you every moment / **I will praise you with every breath**
May all selfishness disappear from me / **And may you always shine forth from my heart**

• ***Closing Hymn: The Wind Beneath My Wings***

by Bette Midler

Oh!...Oh!... It must have been cold there in my shadow / To never have sunlight on your face
You were content to let me shine, that's your way / You always walk a step behind
So, I was the one with all the glory / While you were the one with all the strength
A beautiful face without a name, for so long / A Beautiful smile to hide the pain
Did you ever know that you're my hero / And everything I would like to be
I can fly higher than an eagle / If you are the wind beneath my wings

It might have appeared to go unnoticed / But I've got it all here in my heart
I want you to know I know the truth, of course I know you / I would be nothing without you
Did you ever know that you're my hero / You're everything I wish I could be
I could fly higher than an eagle / If you are the wind beneath my wings
Did I ever tell you you're my hero / You're everything, everything I wish I could be
Oh, and I, I can fly higher than an eagle / If you are the wind beneath my wings
If you are the wind beneath my wings

O, the wind beneath my wings / you, you, you, / You are the wind beneath my wings
Fly! Fly!....Fly away!.....You let me fly so high!
Oh you, you, you the wind beneath my wings / Oh you, you, you the wind beneath my wings
Fly...Fly...Fly higher than the skies / So high I almost touch the sky
Thank you! Thank you! Thank God for you, the wind beneath my wings

Sam Shoemaker Community Recovery Lectio What Price Your Soul? / Lent Three

- ***Recovery Reading: (Taken from the book *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* written by Bill Wilson.) Wilson writes:***

As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic (and addict). So it's not strange that lots of us have had our day at defying God Himself. Sometimes it's because God has not delivered us the good things of life which we specified, as a greedy child makes an impossible list for Santa Claus. More often, though, we had met up with some major calamity, and to our way of thinking lost out because God deserted us. The person we wanted to marry had other notions; we prayed God they'd change their mind, but they didn't. We prayed for healthy children, and were presented with sick ones, or none at all. We prayed for promotions at work, and none came. Loved ones, on whom we heavily depended, were taken from us by so-called *acts of God*. Then we became drunks (and drug addicts), and asked God to stop that. But nothing happened. This was the unkindest cut of all. "*Damn this faith business!*" we said.

When we encountered A.A., the fallacy of our defiance was revealed. At no time had we asked what God's will was for us; instead, we had been telling Him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God and defy Him, too. Belief meant reliance, not; defiance. In A.A., we saw the fruits of this belief: men and women spared from alcohol's final catastrophe. We saw them meet and transcend their other pains and trials. We saw them calmly accept impossible situations, seeking neither to run nor to recriminate. This was not only faith; it was faith that worked under all conditions. We soon concluded that whatever price in humility we must pay, we would pay."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

- ***Meditation Hymn: If That's What It Takes***

by The Isaacs

This place that I'm in / Feels so unfair / This weight on my chest
Seems more than I can bear / I can't see where this is going
But I'll stay on my knees till then. / If that's what it takes
To break my will / To make me still enough to hear your voice
Then I'll trust in You, O Lord. If that's what it takes
To realize without You I'm going the wrong way / Living life in vain
Lord, humble me a little more each day / If that's what it takes

This is not the path / I'd ever choose for me
But Lord you see the bigger picture / And the man that I can be
So, Lord, I'll give you all my fears / And I'll cry a few more tears
If that's what it takes / To break my will / To make me still enough to hear your voice
Then I'll trust in You O, Lord. / If that's what it takes
To realize without You I'm just going the wrong way
Living life in vain / Lord, humble me a little more each day / If that's what it takes

If that's what it takes, to give my all and totally surrender to your plan;
Though I may not understand / Lord, give me strength to make it one more day
If that's what it takes / If that's what it takes

- **Lectio:**

Jesus called the crowd together with his disciples, he said to them:

“Those who want to come after me should deny themselves, pick up their cross, and follow me! Remember, those who try to save their own life are going to lose it, but those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the good news are going to save it. After all, what good does it do a person to acquire the whole world and pay for it with losing his soul? Or what would a person give in exchange for her soul?”

- **Psalm 118.**

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

*** His mercy endures forever.**

From the depths of my troubles, I called to the Lord.

***The Lord answered me and showered me with blessings.**

Open to me the doors of righteousness

*** I will enter through them and give thanks to God.**

For this is the door of the Lord.

*** All who enter here will come to know him.**

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in any man.

***It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in earthly powers.**

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

*** The Lord is our God, and he has given us light.**

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

*** His loving kindness endures forever.**

- **Closing Hymn: "Through All My Days"**

by Nathan Pacheco

Be thou oh my Lord a shield of Righteousness / cover me with grace when I'm afraid
Let this shining light of thy countenance / keep me safe through all my days

When the road is fierce oh remember me / strengthen me with grace that I might stand
Leave me not when blind by my unbelief / hold me in the palm of thy hand

Bend thine ear to hear my fervent prayer / lighten thou this heavy load
Lift me from the grasp of my deep despair / through the power of grace restored

Great is thy name and thy righteousness / I will trust and not be afraid
Place on me my dreams and all my confidence / Praise thy name through all my days
Praise thy name through all my days

Sam Shoemaker Community / Recovery Lectio / Lent 4 / “Lazarus, Come Out!”

Recovery Reading: (The reading is taken from one of Father Bill’s old sermons.)

In the winter of 1934, death was staring Bill Wilson in the face. In just over a year, he’d been detoxed three times. And each time he was released from the hospital, he’d relapse. **He couldn’t stay sober to save his life.** Bill’s doctor had declared him “*a hopeless alcoholic*” and he’d told Bill’s wife to prepare for the worst. And so, when his newly sober friend Ebby Thatcher came to call, he found Bill sitting in his kitchen, severely depressed. *And who wouldn’t be!* Bill was at the point of contemplating suicide. He was ready to choose Death over Life. (I’ve been there in my life - and my guess is some of you have been there too.) And the story of Lazarus reminds me of the way Wilson tried to describe those god-awful feelings – What it was like inside him – deep inside – in the places people never got to see. The places in our souls that have already started to stink!

Bill said his alcoholism was like being chained *hand and foot* to the back-wall of *some very long, dark cave*. And try as he might, he just couldn't break free. He said he could still see his family and his friends standing at the mouth of that cave; and they were there calling to him - begging him to come out - “*Come out of your darkness, Bill; step into the light.*” Bill said he wanted to stop drinking – but every time he tried, he failed; and each time he failed, it seemed like he got pulled back still deeper into the bowels of that long, dark cave.

But when his friend Ebby came and visited him – he saw his first *little ray* of light. He knew he’d finally come *face to face* with another addict who’d *somehow* managed to find the way out of the darkness of his own cave. Ebby was an alcoholic whose drinking-problem was every bit as bad as Bill’s. *And yet*, there he was, sitting right in front of him *sober - free* – “*Unbound*” – *in the words of John’s gospel*. Bill said it was as if Ebby was reaching out his hand, ready to lead him out.

That visit from Ebby started Bill Wilson’s own journey back from the dead. Like Lazarus, and like many of us, Bill was led into “*the sunlight of the Spirit.*”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

Meditation Hymn: You Raise Me Up

by Selah

When I am down, and oh my soul, so weary / When troubles come and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence / Until You come and sit awhile with me

***You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains / You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong, when I am on Your shoulders / You raise me up to more than I can be***

There is no life, no life without this hunger / Each restless heart beats so imperfectly
But when You come, I am filled with wonder / Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity

Lectio:

When Jesus arrived, he found that his friend, Lazarus had been buried four days earlier. Jesus arrives at the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay up against the opening.

Jesus says, *"Take the stone away."*

Martha, the dead man's sister replies, *"But, Master, by this time the body will stink; it's been four days."*

Jesus says to her, *"Didn't I tell you, if you believe you'll see God's majesty?"*

So they took the stone away, and Jesus looked upwards and said,
"Father, thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me...."

Then he shouted at the top of his voice, *"Lazarus, come out!"*

The dead man came out, his hands and his feet bound in strips of burying cloth, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus says to them, *"Unbind him and let him go."*

This reading comes from the Book of Revelation. It was written to a Christian community undergoing attack and meant to assure them that a new world was about to come into view:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, *"See, I am making all things new."*

Closing Hymn: Where No One Stands Alone

by The Narrow Way

Once I stood in the night with my head bowed low / In the darkness as black as could be
And my heart felt alone and I cried, *Oh Lord*, don't hide your face from me

Hold my hand all the way every hour, every day from here to the great unknown
Take my hand let me stand where no one stands alone

Like a king I may live in a palace so tall with great riches to call my own
But I don't know a thing in this whole wide world that's worse than being alone

Hold my hand all the way every hour, every day from here to the great unknown
Take my hand let me stand where no one stands alone