

Separation and Return: How Grace is Found in Sharing our Story with One Another and Connecting it to Scripture

October 10, 2021

The Reverend Elizabeth Knowlton

St. Mark's San Antonio

Recap from Last Week Recording and Outlines also posted online

Narrative story telling as a means of reengaging with one another and connecting our experience with the narratives of scripture.

- Psalms as a “full anatomy of all parts of the soul”
- “There is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror” The Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life of all the griefs, sorrow, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities”
- It is certainly a rear and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baneful infection, hypocrisy
- Calvin offers no trivial answers, no easy fixes, no abstract platitudes
- Does not glorify their suffering or suggest that their mental anguish is a test designed by God to measure the depth of their piety.
- Rather he enters into the depth of their suffering not to explain “why” but to offer them a practice to hold their suffering.
- The practice is that of prayer, we testify and God bears witness
- Transformation of imagination happens when we lift up our groaning to the Divine
- Healing as a three stage process
 - Establishment of safety
 - Remembrance and mourning
 - Reconnection with ordinary life
- Dynamic conversation taking place between a testifier and a witness
- The survivor gives voice to what was previously unspeakable
- The receiver confirms the voice has been heard and that it no longer needs to be hidden in the dark corner of the soul

Three Stages of Psalmic healing

- **Psalms of deliverance**—Establishing Safety, Providence and Divine Witnessing
 - Psalm 10:12-18

¹² Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;
do not forget the oppressed.

¹³ Why do the wicked renounce God,
and say in their hearts, ‘You will not call us to account’?

¹⁴ But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief,
that you may take it into your hands;
the helpless commit themselves to you;
you have been the helper of the orphan.

¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers;
seek out their wickedness until you find none.

¹⁶ The Lord is king for ever and ever;
the nations shall perish from his land.

¹⁷ O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek;
you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear

¹⁸ to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,
so that those from earth may strike terror no more.

- Person directly ask God for support in and rescue from calamity
- Asking God to assist in bringing order into the midst of their experience of extreme disorder
- We can trust our prayers are begin heard and witnessed
- Restoration of a sense of agency.

Psalms of Lament and Mourning - Remembering and offering Testimony

Psalm 22

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

Many bulls encircle me,

strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

they open wide their mouths at me,

like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water,

and all my bones are out of joint;

my heart is like wax;

it is melted within my breast;

my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,

and my tongue sticks to my jaws;

you lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs are all around me;

a company of evildoers encircles me.

My hands and feet have shriveled;

Deliver my soul from the sword,

my life from the power of the dog!

Save me from the mouth of the lion!

For he did not despise or abhor

the affliction of the afflicted;

he did not hide his face from me,

but heard when I cried to him.

2nd stage allows for remembrance and mourning

- Tell the story of what has happened after a safe space has been created
- Allows for grieving the losses they have sustained

- Not important to get the facts all right
- Gaps, silences
- To remember in this context is to pull the experience out of the lurking corners
- They are the groans of the violated
- Don't remove the difficult language
- There is being created a vivid world of imagination where reader can be outraged, grieve, and remember

Stage 3 Psalms of Thanksgiving: Reintegration of the Mundane and the Scope of Divine Grace - Psalm 119

Psalm 119

- ¹ Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord.
- ⁵⁴ Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
- ¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- ¹²⁹ Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
- ¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
- ¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
- ¹⁶⁶ I hope for your salvation, O Lord,
and I fulfil your commandments.
- ¹⁶⁷ My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
- ¹⁶⁸ I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.
- ¹⁷¹ My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
- ¹⁷² My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
- ¹⁷³ Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
- ¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, O Lord,
and your law is my delight.
- ¹⁷⁵ Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
- ¹⁷⁶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out your servant,
for I do not forget your commandments

Third stage of healing often takes a lifetime to enact

Requires an interior world capable of managing images of both haunting violence and kneading bread,

See nature as a hallmark of God's continued presence with us

- Questions:
performative character of interpretation
- Singing
- Power of liturgy to heal