

SAVING BEAUTY

an Easter Exploration



Quiet Day Resources 2

Sacred texts for meditation & reflection

Mark 16: 9-end (NRSV)

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

And Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Paul, in 2 Cor. 4: 6 (NRSV)

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.”

Jesus, in John 11: 25 (NRSV)

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Jesus, in John 8:12 (NRSV)

“For this cause the Son of God Himself said, ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all things to Myself.’ [John 12:32] And thus in this exaltation of the incarnation of His Son, and the glory of His resurrection according to the flesh, the Father not only made all things beautiful in part, but also, we may well say, clothed them wholly with beauty and dignity.”

John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*. 5, 4

“Your path in life is not to seek for love, but to seek and find all the barriers in your life that we have built against love.”

Rumi (13th century)

Suggestions for your quiet time

Reflect and pray...

Spend time reflecting on Rumi's call that we "seek and fine all the barriers we have built against love." What are those barriers? How might you begin to take them down—through forgiving those who have hurt you? What source of encouragement can you find to risk doing this work of dismantling such barriers and opening yourself to "new life"? Try writing all these things down on a piece of paper, and take them to a quiet place outside and, as you pray that you might find release from their hold upon you, burn the paper (in a safe place!). Take the ashes left over the dig them into a window box or a garden that you often pass near the place where you live. Imagine that these ashes will nourish the soil, and become part of plants that will rise in the spring.

Radiance...

Spend time meditating on what it might mean for you to risk trusting in "a greater radiance" that is within you, even though you've not yet been able to open yourself to its presence and power? How is God's light calling you to open your heart, with greater trust, so that you might enable this light to shine forth within—and through—you, for your sake and for the sake of others in your life?

Imagine...

Imagine simple, direct ways you find yourself called to "become love" in your life. What do you need to let go of to enable this opening to happen? What disappointments, resentments, fears are you holding on to—or are holding onto *you*, that you might begin to let go of in your life? Practice breathing deeply as you count, slowly, to ten on your inbreath, and then do the same on your outbreath. As you breathe in, invite God's loving presence into your life at the places of your resentment or discouragement, and, as you breathe out again, imagine what it might mean for you to "become" love in your life. Stay with this simple meditation for 20 minutes. Plan to repeat it again in the days and weeks to come. Keep a journal of your experience on this journey of opening your heart to become love.

Imagine your way into that "book" Kei Miller describes where you find the word "let" meant only for you. What is it that this might lead you to pray for, today and in this Easter season? What "light" do you pray God might "let shine out of [your] darkness," to recall the apostle Paul's promise?

Take a quiet walk, inviting yourself to "consider the radiance" that is present in your life, in your world. Be concrete on your walk. Look for signs of beauty in ordinary and unexpected places. Imagine what it means to allow your opening to this radiance to help you let the "breadth" of this gift turn your fear toward praise. When you return from your walk, write down the radiance of things you noticed, and offer them in praise to the Giver of Life.

Poetry as prayer...

“The City Limits”

When you consider the radiance, that it does not withhold itself but pours its abundance without selection into every nook and cranny not overhung or hidden; when you consider

that birds’ bones make no awful noise against the light but lie low in the light as in a high testimony; when you consider the radiance, that it will look into the guiltiest

swervings of the weaving heart and bear itself upon them, not flinching into disguise or darkening; when you consider the abundance of such resource as illuminates the glow-blue

bodies and gold-skeined wings of flies swarming the dumped guts of a natural slaughter or the coil of shit and in no way winces from its storms of generosity; when you consider

that air or vacuum, snow or shale, squid or wolf, rose or lichen, each is accepted into as much light as it will take, then the heart moves roomier, the man stands and looks about, the

leaf does not increase itself above the grass, and the dark work of the deepest cells is of a tune with May bushes and fear lit by the breadth of such calmly turns to praise.

A. R. Ammons



The resurrection in Stanley Spencer's work

If you would like to find out more about Stanley Spencer's depictions of the resurrection, you may want to read the article by Victoria Ibbett "The theme of resurrection in Stanley Spencer's work" [here](#) where she reflects on some of the paintings below.



Music for reflection

Andrea Bocelli, a live performance from the Cathedral of Milan (Italy), recorded during the first COVID-19 lockdown on April 12, 2020 (25 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huTUOek4LgU&t=707s>

Johann Sebastian Bach, "Easter Oratorio", led by John Eliot Gardiner (recorded 2014; 42 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qMXxaSaoOg>

Vivaldi, "Gloria"; recorded by the all-female orchestra and chorus at the Pieta in Venice (2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgaOVV4JQHA>