

Heal Us As We Long For Hope

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Psalm 80:4-7

⁴O Lord GOD of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
⁶You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Revelation 21:1-5

¹Then 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. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
⁴he 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."
⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

I stood at the kitchen sink washing dishes. Suddenly I felt myself overcome by these pandemic seasons of COVID and racial injustice. I began to sob. Tears began to fall and mingle with the dishwater. Tears of grief and loss; tears of frustration; tears of confusion; tears of overwhelm and exhaustion; tears that cried "how long, how long, O God?" They seemed like "bowls of tears to drink" (ELW Psalm 80:5). Perhaps you have known such tears these days...or walked with others who have.

It's been said that tears flow like a stream through the pages of our scriptures, that the Bible is a memory book of tears. Hannah, deeply hurt and praying to the Lord with many tears. Job, scorned by friends and eyes pouring out tears to God. The people of Israel by the waters of Babylon who wept. The writer of Ecclesiastes, who sees the tears of the oppressed, those with no one to comfort them.

But also a woman who bathes the feet of Jesus with her tears. Jesus weeping for his friend Lazarus. Mary Magdalene weeping outside the tomb and asked by the angels: "Woman, why are you weeping?" Why are you weeping? **Because of love.** The woman loved Jesus. Jesus loved Lazarus. Mary loved Jesus. In the sixteenth century, Teresa of Avila said, "God gives us tears to awaken us to love." God gives us tears to awaken us to love.

As we pray Psalm 80 in this Advent season of waiting and expectation, perhaps we might think of Mary as receiving the tears of God, years and years of God's love building up to overflowing. In Jeremiah 9, God is the one who cries: "My eyes [are] a fountain of tears, eyelids gushing with water." God's tears of love fall into Mary, watering the seed of the Word, the tears of God as the flesh of Christ, the body of Christ as bread for the world, the bread of tears.

Even if this year you journey to the manger with tears...even if your tears mingle with the dishwasher or the Christmas ornaments or the zoom calls or the cards & greetings, know that those tears are also joined to the waters in which you were baptized. That baptismal water contained God's tears of love to nourish and restore you. That baptismal water holds you as you long for hope. That baptismal water promises you that the One for whom we wait will wipe away every tear and make all things new. Come, thou long-expected Jesus.

Questions for reflection:

How have you experienced tears awakening you to love?
Have your tears ever brought healing and hope?
Have your tears invited you to draw nearer to the God who draws near to you in Christ?

We pray:

Gracious God, there are times when it seems you give us tears too many to measure. We cry out, "how long?" People we love suffer and die. Homes are destroyed by flood or fire. Racism lurks in our hearts and shapes our systems. We drink the tears that flow in a broken world such as ours. In those times, we cry out with the Psalmist: Restore us, O God, let your face shine with the tears of love, that we and your whole creation may be healed, saved, and made whole. Keep us watchful in our weeping and our waiting so that we do not miss your presence already among us, Emmanuel. Awaken in us your love that makes all things new.

Amen.

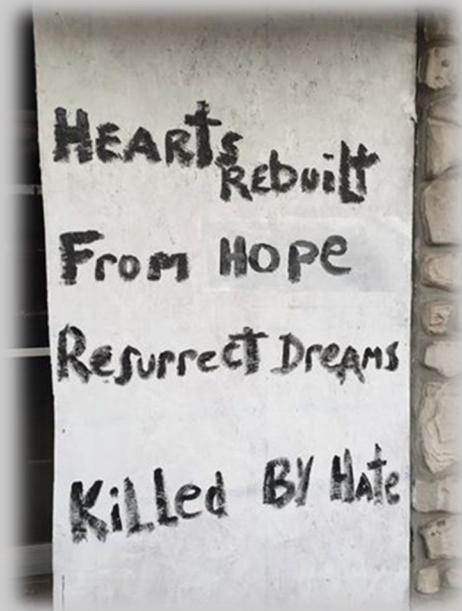
Mantra for the Week:

As you go through the week, I invite you to find time to pause from the "busy-ness" of your day and pray. As you pray, you may use the phrase:

"Heal us, we long for hope."

or

"May our tears awaken us to love."



This hope we have as an anchor for the soul is both strong and steadfast.



Even in the darkest of nights there is hope.

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