**Contemplative Service for Wednesday**,

**October 18, 2023**



**First reading**: from Psalm 130

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Holy One.

Hear our voices!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of our supplications!

If you, O God should mark our strife and violence,

God, who could stand?

But there is healing with you,

so that we may draw near.

We wait for you, our souls wait,

and in your word we hope;

our souls wait for you

more than those who watch for the morning,

more than those who watch for the morning.

**Music**: “By the Waters of Babylon” performed by Don McLean

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTnspbSjKVc&t=4s

**Second reading**: by Glenn Packiam

Lament is not only for the suffering; it is for *solidarity* with the suffering. We love our neighbor when we allow their experience of pain to become the substance of our prayer. This, after all, is what Jesus did. The strange act of asking why God had forsaken Him has been analyzed by scholars and theologians for what it means about our theology [...] But what we often miss is that Jesus was praying the words of Psalm 22 precisely because that was the prayer of many Jewish martyrs in the first century.Jesus, dying the vile and shameful death on the cross prayed in solidarity with the suffering. Indeed, His death was the ultimate prayer of solidarity.

**Music**: “Sheebag Sheemore,” performed by Marie Rhines

**Time of Silent Contemplation**

*Tonglen practice, also known as “taking and sending,” reverses our usual logic of avoiding suffering and seeking pleasure. In tonglen practice, we visualize taking in the pain of others with every in-breath and sending out whatever will benefit them on the out-breath. In the process, we become liberated from age- old patterns of selfishness. We begin to feel love for both ourselves and others; we begin to take care of ourselves and others.*

*Tonglen awakens our compassion and introduces us to a far bigger view of reality. By doing the practice, we begin to connect with the open dimension of our being.*

*Tonglen can be done for those who are ill, those who are dying or have died, or those who are in pain of any kind. It can be done as a formal meditation practice or right on the spot at any time. If we are out walking and we see someone in pain, we can breathe in that person’s pain and send out relief to them.*

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*Tonglen can extend infinitely. As you do the practice, your compassion naturally expands over time, and so does your realization that things are not as solid as you thought, which is a glimpse of emptiness. As you do this practice, gradually at your own pace, you will be surprised to find yourself more and more able to be there for others, even in what used to seem like impossible situations.*

*—Pema Chodron*

**Communal Blessing**

Kind One, let us not hurry through our pain, rushing like a harried worker to the next task.

We ask to pause with you in our unknowing. Before we act, slow us to hear you, to hear solidarity and compassion. We pray that we will use our lament to end violence of spirit and body. We pray that our grief will not be an end but the beginning of a new thing. Amen.

Music: “Lament” by Moondog

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lsjsoy8sPvs>

[Note: Moondog was a gifted street musician who often performed on 6th Ave. in New York City. His music influenced Steve Reich and Phillip Glass. I love this lament for its sense of resilience and vitality.]

*A blessing of peace in hard times. A blessing of love rising amid anger and grief.*