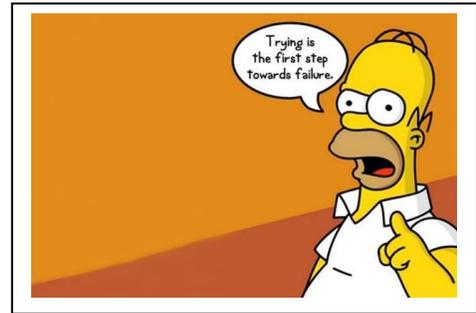


November 13, 2022

## The Church gathered at St. Mary's Episcopal

Message from Michael Burke, Rector



Scripture readings:

Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; The Gospel according to: Luke 21, verses 5-19.

Good morning.

As some of you might already know through the prayer chain, I lost my brother Dan a few days ago. He was on the way back from the store in Wasilla, suffered a massive heart attack and died Thursday night at the age of 70. Thank you all for your prayers and support during this time of loss for me and my family.

I was Dan's music curator for over thirty years. He would remember songs and artists from throughout his life, that were meaningful to him, and I would track them down and, well, many years ago, I would make him mixed tapes of them all on cassette. This past Friday night, Nancy and I lit a fire in the fireplace, and sat down and I put together a Spotify playlist of songs, thinking of my brother Dan. It was healing to hear them, and to think about why they were chosen.

And then yesterday, I got to thinking. If a person were to make up a playlist of songs that sort of make sense of *my own* life, and the meaning I made of life at various points, what would that playlist be like?

**What about you?** If someone was to make up a playlist that sort of made sense of, and meaning out of, *your* life, what would it be like? I don't mean necessarily your *favorite* songs, although that might be the case as well, but rather songs that reflect or give voice to the struggles and purposes of why you lived.

**What would your playlist be like?**

And after quite a bit of thought and reflection, **I have decided that I want my playlist to filled with songs of Resistance, Resilience, and Faith. Resistance, Resilience, and Faith.** I'll say more about that in a bit.

But first, let's ground ourselves in the Scriptures for today.

The Gospel, from the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Luke, is filled with apocalyptic imagery from another time. The occasion is one in which Jesus is walking in the great temple in Jerusalem with his disciples, and they are admiring what was inarguably one of the great wonders of the ancient world. They are remarking on the gold, the exquisite stone craft... And Jesus pipes in and says that, you know, "someday, all of this will be thrown down."

Now that's a real buzz-kill. Thanks Jesus. Who invited this guy along, anyway, right?

Someday, he says, there will be wars, insurrections, plagues, and even earthquakes. And even your own lives will be in chaos.

In doing so, Jesus echoes a bit of the ancient Jewish tradition of apocalyptic literature, in an age where to live in those times, it felt as though each day was simply one day closer to the cataclysmic end. All of Palestine was poised on a razor's edge of barely submerged tension, revolution, and destruction. And, of course, some forty years later the temple and all of Jerusalem were *in fact* destroyed by Roman legions, the people massacred and scattered, and the great stones torn down one from another. The ancient historian Josephus reported that 1.1 million people died in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which began in April of the year 70.<sup>1</sup>

To read Jesus's words today I find them still a little unsettling in their seeming timelessness.

Wars? ... Check.

Insurrections? ... Check.

Plagues? Um... ...Check.

There was a small 3.1 earthquake, just big enough to feel, up by Sutton an hour before I wrote this yesterday. Did you feel that? I mean, come on!



**How do we resist the forces of chaos, loss, and decline in our lives and in the world?**

But the Anglican or Episcopalian tradition, of which we are a part, thankfully is not one of those religious traditions who get unreasonably apprehensive and see signs of the "end times" in every news headline. But once a year, at the close of one liturgical cycle and just as we begin the new church year at Advent, the three-year cycle of lectionary or scripture readings bring us echoes of apocalypse, judgement, and turmoil.

For neither our personal lives, nor human history, nor our sacred story of our shared faith is "sunshine all the time," but contrasts of daybreak and midnight, pain and healing, hope and despair.

Let me ask you this:

- ✓ But how do we sustain ourselves when destruction comes?
- ✓ How do we **resist** the forces of chaos, loss, and decline in our lives and in the world?
- ✓ As Isaiah says in the first reading today, how do we labor but not in vain, nor bear children for calamity?

Eric Greitens, a former Navy Seal, has a book out now titled "Resilience: Hard Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life." Its worth the read.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Jerusalem\\_%2870\\_CE%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_%2870_CE%29)

But one sentence stands out for me is when he writes “great calamity met with great spirit can create great strength.”<sup>2</sup> If you look up the word “resilience” in the dictionary, it will tell you that resilience is “bouncing back.” I know its kind of silly to argue with a dictionary, but that really is not a good definition of how modern psychology understands “resilience” today.

Resilience is NOT “bouncing back” after hardship or calamity. Now, admittedly, “bouncing back” is what we all *want to do*, but its largely impossible. What we *want* after a brutal divorce, or a pandemic, or a job loss, or loss of a relationship, or the death of a loved one, is to “bounce back” to the way things used to be. We want to “go back to normal.”

But life is not bi-directional, nor is history. After a tragic sequence of events, we can never return to a life or world in which those things never happened, no matter how much we wish it were so. And we can’t “brave face” or “white-knuckle” our way forward as if those things never happened, because they did. And they have changed us forever.

But what we *can do* – what “resilience” really means – is not to “go back” but to *move forward* through healthy ways of integrating the pain, the brokenness, and the hardship.

### What “resilience” really means

- is not to “go back” but to move forward through healthy ways of integrating the pain, the brokenness, and the hardship.

This takes courage. Since I’m rewriting the dictionary today, I might as well tell you that I believe the definition of “courage” is NOT being unafraid.

Courage necessarily includes fear. (Otherwise, it’s just false bravado and denial). Courage is recognizing the fear, but also recognizing that God is present with us in the midst of disaster or loss or chaos and fear, and that God will never let us go until we can stand upon our own. Even, perhaps especially, when it feels like we cannot.

Courage, walking forward with God through the midst of it all, transforms the emotional structures of our being. That’s how healing happens. That’s how hope floats.

Brene Brown, the researcher, therapist, and author, says something similar. The whole body of her work<sup>3</sup> is organized around three things:

- Be you, recognizing that gift of imperfection in yourself and in the world,
- Dare greatly, be “all in”, knowing that you are never alone.
- Rising Strong – Fall. Get Up. Try Again. Repeat. Be Transformed as you do.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Greitens, Resilience: Hard Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life, Clarion and Marriner, Publishers, 2015. ISBN13: 9780544323988; ISBN10: 054432398X., pages 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.powells.com/author/brene-brown>

Even that great sage Homer Simpson said: Trying is the first step toward failure.

Brene uses this concept of “whole-heartedness”. She suggests that we are called to engage our lives from a place of **worthiness**. **That we are called to cultivate the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, “no matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough.”**

It’s going to bed thinking, **“Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the truth that I am brave and worthy of love and belonging.”**



**Courage, walking forward with God through the midst of it all, transforms the emotional structures of our being. That’s how healing happens. That’s how hope floats.**

Together, we are all **More Than Enough**. That is the core of our faith in God and faith in Jesus, whose Spirit moves around us, amongst us, and within us. We believe in us because we believe in the power and spirit of God working in us. **Because that’s who God is.**

If you come to church each week, and you find the words of the liturgy seem to resonate with much of what Brene Brown writes of, don’t be terribly surprised. She is an Episcopalian and the same words of the liturgy wash over her and bathe her each Sunday as well.

St. Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, . . .”<sup>4</sup>

We live in a world of much brokenness and pain, but there is also beauty, and truth, and holiness, and compassion, and most of all, love and new life in God. As Bono sings, “There is always pain before the child is born.”<sup>5</sup>

When and if someone somewhere one day makes a playlist of my life, I hope it will be filled with **Songs of Resistance, Resilience and Faith**.

**Resistance** against chaos.

**Resistance** against my own hard-heartedness

**Resistance** against the structures of racism, homophobia, poverty, and violence in this world, and against anything that diminishes the image of God in each and every human being.

I hope that my playlist is full of songs of **Resilience**:

Songs that remind us the way of healing is forward, not backwards, through that darkness alive with possibility, in which God is with us always, forgiving, healing, strengthening, renewing..

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:22-23a

<sup>5</sup> U2, “Yahweh”.

Songs that dare speak the truth that our God is always a God of second chances, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and...

Songs rooted in the **Faith** that ours is a God that never leaves us, and who makes all things new.

Fans of the Irish band U2 will know that for decades, they have closed concerts with the song "40",

After a concert filled with songs that speak of injustice, oppression, racism, self-centeredness, and fear, the final words sung from the stage would be from Psalm 40

"I waited patiently for the Lord  
He inclined and heard my cry  
He brought me up out of the pit  
Out of the miry clay

And the chorus would begin:

I will sing, sing a new song  
I will sing, sing a new song

As the lights dim and the band instruments fade out, tens of thousands of people in the stadium would be left standing, singing acapella into a kind of holy darkness.

How long to sing this song?  
How long to sing this song?  
How long, how long, how long  
How long to sing this song?

It is from Psalm 40, found in the Book of Psalms, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures.  
It is a Psalm of David.

**It is Psalm of Resistance, Resilience, and Faith.**

When I die, just so you know, make my playlist of those kinds of songs.

I love you all, friends. Amen.



**Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when  
hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for  
which our fathers sighed?**

-  
*Lift Every Voice and Sing*

## Scripture Appointed for Today

### The Collect

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### Hebrew Scriptures - Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens  
and a new earth;

the former things shall not be remembered  
or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I am creating;

for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
and delight in my people;

no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,  
or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it  
an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;

for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;

## 7

for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain,  
or bear children for calamity;

for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord--  
and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer,  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
but the serpent-- its food shall be dust!

They shall not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

### **The Psalm - Psalm 98**

1 Sing to the Lord a new song, \*  
for he has done marvelous things.

2 With his right hand and his holy arm \*  
has he won for himself the victory.

3 The Lord has made known his victory; \*  
his righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.

4 He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel, \*  
and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

5 Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; \*  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

6 Sing to the Lord with the harp, \*  
with the harp and the voice of song.

7 With trumpets and the sound of the horn \*  
shout with joy before the King, the Lord.

## 8

8 Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, \*  
the lands and those who dwell therein.

9 Let the rivers clap their hands, \*  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord,  
when he comes to judge the earth.

10 In righteousness shall he judge the world \*  
and the peoples with equity

### **The Epistle - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

### **The Gospel - Luke 21:5-19**

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be

betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

## Song Lyrics file:

### Lift Every Voice and Sing

by James Weldon Johnson (June 17, 1871 - June 26, 1938)

Originally written by Johnson for a presentation in celebration of the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. This was originally performed in Jacksonville, Florida, by children. The popular title for this work is:

'THE NEGRO NATIONAL ANTHEM'

Lift every voice and sing  
 Till earth and heaven ring,  
 Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
 Let our rejoicing rise  
 High as the listening skies,  
 Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
 Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
 Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us,  
 Facing the rising sun of our new day begun  
 Let us march on till victory is won.  
 Stony the road we trod,  
 Bitter the chastening rod,  
 Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
 Yet with a steady beat,  
 Have not our weary feet  
 Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears have been watered,  
 We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
 Out from the gloomy past,  
 Till now we stand at last  
 Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
 God of our silent tears,  
 Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;  
 Thou who has by Thy might  
 Led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, Our God, where we met Thee;  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our GOD,  
True to our native land.

**You Are the Light** *by Maria McKee and Marvin Etzioni, performed by Lone Justice*

You are the light in my dark world  
You are the fire that will always burn  
You are the light  
You are the light  
You are the light in my dark world

Oh how you shine in my time of darkness  
Oh how you shine when everything seems hopeless  
You know how to help me  
When I can't stand on my own  
Don't let go now

You are the light in my dark world  
You are the fire that will always burn  
You are the light  
You are the light  
You are the light in my dark world

Oh how you shine in my time of indecision  
Oh how you shine, gonna give this girl some vision  
You know how to let go  
When I can't stand on my own  
Don't let go now

You are the light in my dark world  
You are the fire that will always burn  
You are the light  
You are the light  
You are the light in my dark world

You know how to let go  
When I can't stand on my own  
Don't let go now ...

## **Yahweh**

By U2

Take these shoes  
Click clacking down some dead end street  
Take these shoes  
And make them fit  
Take this shirt  
Polyester white trash made in nowhere  
Take this shirt  
And make it clean, clean  
Take this soul  
Stranded in some skin and bones  
Take this soul  
And make it sing

[Chorus]

Yahweh, Yahweh  
Always pain before a child is born  
Yahweh, Yahweh  
Still I'm waiting for the dawn

Take these hands  
Teach them what to carry  
Take these hands  
Don't make a fist, no  
Take this mouth  
So quick to criticize  
Take this mouth  
Give it a kiss

[Chorus]

Yahweh, Yahweh  
Always pain before a child is born  
Yahweh, Yahweh  
Still, I'm waiting for the dawn  
Still waiting for the dawn  
The sun is coming up

The sun is coming up on the ocean  
 This love is like a drop in the ocean  
 This love is like a drop in the ocean

Yahweh, Yahweh  
 Always pain before a child is born  
 Yahweh, tell me now  
 Why the dark before the dawn?  
 Oh, oh-oh, oh-oh, oh-oh, oh-oh oh

[Verse 3]  
 Take this city  
 A city should be shining on a hill  
 Take this city  
 If it be your will

What no man can own  
 No man can take  
 Take this heart  
 Take this heart  
 Take this heart  
 And make it break

### **“40”**

Song by U2, from Pslam 40

I waited patiently for the Lord  
 He inclined and heard my cry  
 He brought me up out of the pit  
 Out of the miry clay

[Chorus]  
 I will sing, sing a new song  
 I will sing, sing a new song  
 How long to sing this song?  
 How long to sing this song?  
 How long, how long, how long  
 How long to sing this song?

[Verse 2]  
 You set my feet upon a rock  
 And made my footsteps firm

Many will see, many will see and fear

[Chorus]

I will sing, sing a new song

How long to sing this song?

## Bits and Pieces

### Psalm 40<sup>[a]</sup>

*For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he turned to me and heard my cry.

<sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm place to stand.

<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear the LORD  
and put their trust in him.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed is the one  
who trusts in the LORD,  
who does not look to the proud,  
to those who turn aside to false gods.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Many, LORD my God,  
are the wonders you have done,  
the things you planned for us.  
None can compare with you;  
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,  
they would be too many to declare.

<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—  
 but my ears you have opened<sup>[c]</sup>—  
 burnt offerings and sin offerings<sup>[d]</sup> you did not require.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—  
 it is written about me in the scroll.<sup>[e]</sup>”

<sup>8</sup> I desire to do your will, my God;  
 your law is within my heart.”

<sup>9</sup> I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;  
 I do not seal my lips, LORD,  
 as you know.

<sup>10</sup> I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;  
 I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.  
 I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness  
 from the great assembly.

<sup>11</sup> Do not withhold your mercy from me, LORD;  
 may your love and faithfulness always protect me.

<sup>12</sup> For troubles without number surround me;  
 my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.  
 They are more than the hairs of my head,  
 and my heart fails within me.

<sup>13</sup> Be pleased to save me, LORD;  
 come quickly, LORD, to help me.

<sup>14</sup> May all who want to take my life  
 be put to shame and confusion;  
 may all who desire my ruin  
 be turned back in disgrace.

<sup>15</sup> May those who say to me, “Aha! Aha!”  
 be appalled at their own shame.

<sup>16</sup> But may all who seek you  
 rejoice and be glad in you;  
 may those who long for your saving help always say,  
 “The LORD is great!”

<sup>17</sup> But as for me, I am poor and needy;  
 may the Lord think of me.  
 You are my help and my deliverer;  
 you are my God, do not delay.

June 17, 2008

### What's the meaning of "Hope Floats"?

Some of you may have seen the movie entitled, "Hope Floats". For those of you who haven't, the short version goes something like this. A woman who "thinks" she is happy is dumbfounded to find herself on a national talk show where she learns that her best friend has been having an affair with her husband.

In an instant of unanticipated angst, her world would forever change. How many of us have been in similar situations? I have to admit that I've been cruising along on auto-pilot for a while now, and suddenly I've felt like I've been broadsided by a Mac Truck delivering the liver disease and diabetes of two of my children. In an instant of unanticipated angst, like Birdee...my world has forever changed.

"Birdee" returns to her hometown to rediscover what is truly important after being devastated by her husband's infidelity. The following conversation between Birdee and her young daughter ties the phrase "hope floats" into the film: *"Childhood is what you spend the rest of your life trying to overcome. That's what momma always says. She says that beginnings are scary, endings are usually sad, but it's the middle that counts the most. Try to remember that when you find yourself at a new beginning. Just give hope a chance to float up. And it will, too..."*

From: [https://handmaidsofmercy.typepad.com/handmaids\\_of\\_mercy/2008/06/hope-floats-wha.html](https://handmaidsofmercy.typepad.com/handmaids_of_mercy/2008/06/hope-floats-wha.html) , accessed 11-12-2022.

### Songs of Resistance

On my wall of our home, Nancy and I have a framed print of a passage from Woody Guthrie. It has traveled with me wherever I have lived for over forty years. It reads like this:

"I hate a song that makes you think that you are not any good. I hate a song that makes you think that you are just born to lose. Bound to lose. No good to nobody. No good for nothing. Because you are too old or too young or too fat or too slim or too ugly or too this or too that. Songs that run you down or poke fun at you on account of your bad luck or hard travelling. I am out to fight those songs to my very last breath of air and my last drop of blood. I am out to sing songs that will prove to you that this is your world and that if it has hit you pretty hard and knocked you for a dozen loops, no matter what color, what size you are, how you are built, I am out to sing the songs that make you take pride in yourself and in your work. And the songs that I sing are made up for the most part by all sorts of folks just about like you. I could hire out to the other side, the big money side, and get several dollars every week just to quit singing my own kind of songs and

to sing the kind that knock you down still farther and the ones that poke fun at you even more and the ones that make you think that you've not got any sense at all. But I decided a long time ago that I'd starve to death before I'd sing any such songs as that. The radio waves and your movies and your jukeboxes and your songbooks are already loaded down and running over with such no good songs as that anyhow."

— Woody Guthrie