

Home Meditation Texts for Holy Saturday, March 31st, 2018

John 18: 38-42

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now, Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, though in secret, because he feared the Jewish authorities. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.¹ At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no-one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Him there.

At last Jesus receives the tenderness and respect He so richly deserved. Even now, it is only from those He had personally touched, and therefore changed. Nonetheless, we are at the very beginning of devotion to Jesus. Take some time to enter and visualize this story; may that time be blessed.

Ps. 31: 1-4, 15-16

In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.
Turn your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue;
Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.
Since you are my rock and my fortress,
For the sake of your name lead and guide me.
Free me from the trap that is set for me –
For you are my refuge.

¹ That is, they did all they could do by sundown, when the Sabbath began and they could not do more. Jewish custom provided for this possibility; others (Mary and the women), it was understood, would finish after the Sabbath.

My times are in your hands;

Deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.

Let your face shine on your servant;

Save me in your unfailing love.

Just above those last two couplets, David had reflected this: "I am a dread to my friends – those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten by them as though I were dead." Jesus spends all of this day in the dark of the tomb, with all that implies in a culture with no artificial light, and with all that implies of the forces of darkness – His dying words still echoing in our minds and hearts: "My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

Can you live inside this story a brief while? May your attempt be blessed.

Job 14: 1-14

Man born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower – and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, man does not endure. Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring Him before your judgment? Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No-one!! Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months, and have set limits he cannot exceed. So look away from Him and let Him alone! – til He has put in His time as a hired man.

At least there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.

But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. As water disappears from the sea, or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, so man lays down and does not rise. Til the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.

If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me until your anger has passed!!

If only you would set me a time and then remember me!!

If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service, I will wait for my renewal to come.

Since we are reading this deliberately with Jesus in mind, it is hard not to think of the root and stump of Jesse, then of the Tree of Jesse, where Jesus is topmost. Think a while of the long dry

spells: in the life of Israel; in our own lives and the lives of the ones we love. Jesus lies in the ground, and we all wait. Even now, there are two things we wait for: His rising, yes! But also, already, this, as Peter says in Acts 3: 21: He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.

Please wait a while now on the mourner's bench; and may that time be fruitful.

In the Evening: Ps. 143

O Lord hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy;

In your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.

Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no-one living is righteous before you.

The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground;

He makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead;

So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

I remember the days of long ago;

I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails.

Do not hide your face from me, or I will be like those who go down to the pit.

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.

Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I hide myself in you.

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;

May your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life, in your righteousness bring me out of trouble.

In your unfailing love, silence my enemies, destroy all my foes,

For I am your servant.