

Lent Bible Study Handbook

The Presbyterian Church of Dover
Wednesdays, Feb. 21 – March 20, 2024, 6 PM



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Pre-study Notes

Because we are not meeting until the Wednesday, February 21, the Wednesday before the Second Sunday of Lent, the following is provided for your personal devotions.

Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14) | *Wandering Heart: Tune My Heart*

Psalm 51:1-17 (NRSVue)

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret
heart.
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your
deliverance.
¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would
not be pleased.
¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken
spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will
not despise.

Tune My Heart

Tune my heart.
Like an old violin,
like a worn down piano,
I have been left out in all manners of weather;
I have been left alone for far too long.
So like a concertmaster
with a steady hand,
tune me up.
Listen and learn
the cracked keys,

the broken strings.
Memorize the forgotten intervals
that even I did not know.
And then, when we're ready,
When this creaky heart is tuned,
teach me a new song.

*Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed |
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1st Sunday of Lent | *Wandering Heart: Jesus Sought Me*

Psalm 25:1-10 (NRSVue)

¹ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
² O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,

Luke 5:1-11 (NRSVue)

⁵ Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done this, they caught

All This Time

I put my headphones in.
I walk quickly.
I look toward the ground.
I create one million barriers of independence,
but *still* God seeks after me.
God leans a rainbow over the sky.
God sends sun after the rain.
God blankets the earth with wildflowers. God
allows music to carry

for they have been from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!
⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹ He leads the humble in what is right
and teaches the humble his way.
¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love
and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

and laughter to rise,
all so that I might notice.
And when I do notice,
the unfurling that begins in my soul
is slow and holy and burning.
I am not alone.
God has been chasing after me
all this time.

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2nd Sunday of Lent | *Wandering Heart: Rescue Me From Danger*

Psalm 22:23-31 (NRSVue)

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me
but heard when I cried to him.
²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great
congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.
May your hearts live forever!
²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord,

and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
²⁸ For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.
²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth
bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the
dust,
and I shall live for him.
³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord
³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet
unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Matthew 14:22-33 (NRSVue)

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into
a boat and go on ahead to the other side, while
he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had
dismissed the crowds, he went up the
mountain by himself to pray. When evening
came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time
the boat, battered by the waves, was far from
the land, for the wind was against
them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came
walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when
the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they
were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they
cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus
spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do
not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you,
command me to come to you on the
water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of
the boat, started walking on the water, and
came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the
strong wind, he became frightened, and,
beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save
me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his
hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of
little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they
got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And
those in the boat worshiped him, saying,
"Truly you are the Son of God."

Rescue Me

I'd rather not need rescue.
I'd prefer a five-step plan
and a quick-fix solution.
I'd prefer stubborn insistence
over honest vulnerability,
because rescue requires
asking for help.
Rescue names
the rising water. Rescue sees
the tired, treading feet. Rescue feels

the swell of the wind
and the rain at a slant.
But when the floor falls out
and the world is on fire
and my small hands
cannot fix the hurt welling in me,
the prayer that slips out
is *rescue*
rescue
rescue me.

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3rd Sunday of Lent | *Wandering Heart: Praise the Mount*

Psalm 19 (NRSVue)

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God,
and the firmament proclaims his
handiwork.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth
and their words to the end of the world.
In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his
wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs
its course with joy.
⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens
and its circuit to the end of them,
and nothing is hid from its heat.
⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;

Matthew 16:13-20 (NRSVue)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of
Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man
is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the
Baptist but others Elijah and still others
Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to
them, “But who do you say that I
am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the
Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And
Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon
son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not

the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
¹² But who can detect one’s own errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
¹³ Keep back your servant also from the
insolent; do not let them have dominion over
me. Then I shall be blameless
and innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

revealed this to you but my Father in
heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on
this rock I will build my church, and the gates
of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will
give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,
and whatever you bind on earth will be bound
in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth
will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he sternly
ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that
he was the Messiah.

Praise the Mount

I have stayed quiet before.
I have held my tongue
while passing mountains.
I have slipped my hands deep into pockets,
despite the music that invites me to dance.
I have glimpsed a new moon and a new love
and have acted as if it was something other than a complete, God-given miracle.
But not today.
Not today.
Today I will dance.
Today I will tap my toes all the way to heaven's gates.
Today I will point out every shade of gold and periwinkle that we pass.
Today I will talk about my faith like we talk about the weather—
early and unprompted, comfortable and unashamed.
Today I will tell you that God did such a good job with freckles, willow trees,
and your entire being.
And I will not be embarrassed by my own conviction.
I will not swallow my praise.
I have stayed quiet before,
but not today.
Today I will sing.

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4th Sunday of Lent | *Wandering Heart: I'm Fixed Upon It*

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (NRSVue)

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

² Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
those he redeemed from trouble

³ and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south...

¹⁷ Some were sick through their sinful ways
and because of their iniquities endured
affliction;

¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.

¹⁹ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;

²⁰ he sent out his word and healed them
and delivered them from destruction.

²¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast
love,

for his wonderful works to humankind.

²² And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

Matthew 16:21-23 (NRSVue)

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Open Hands

We are born with the ability
to wrap our fingers around another,
to hold tight to what we know.
Maybe that's where the instinct comes from—
this clinging,
this sinking,
this holding on.
Maybe that's why Peter cries, "Never!"
when Jesus must leave.
From the very beginning
we've known how to hold tight.
So I pray:
open up my hands.
Uncurl my fingers

one by one.
Loosen the grip
that I hold unyielding.
Remind me that birds must fly
and children must grow
and leaves must fall.
And even though
we are born with the ability
to hold tight,
we can learn how to love
with open hands.

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5th Sunday of Lent | *Wandering Heart: Teach Me*

Psalm 119:9-16 (NRSVue)

⁹ How can young people keep their way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your
commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
¹² Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes.

Matthew 18:15-22 (NRSVue)

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be

Teach Me

Teach me about the ways of the wind,
about the ways of the world,
about the ways of the heart.
Teach me about the soft crook of my lover's
arm,
and the way two souls can hold each other
close.
Teach me about forgiveness, about the
language of *I'm sorry*
and the softness of sincerity.
Teach me about abundance, about *seventy-*
times-seven
and *all the days of my life*.
Teach me about joy, about its contagious
weaving
and its soul-healing.

¹³ With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
¹⁴ I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

Teach me about mercy, about open hands and
deep breaths.
Teach me about the dawn of time and the
stars in the sky.
Teach me what matters most.
Teach me what is mine to do.
Teach this achingly curious heart
until I run out of questions
or I run out of days.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
and I will have a life well-lived.

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6th Sunday of Lent/Palm Sunday | *Wandering Heart: Songs of Loudest Praise*

John 12:12-16 (NRSVue)

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

Courage

We summon every ounce of courage.

We give ourselves pep talks

and we call our friends.

We dig deep within.

We practice the words out loud,

rolling them around in our mouths,

imagining the response.

We deal out every “what if” card our brain holds on to

and spend absurd amounts of time

imagining all the ways it could go wrong.

And then finally, blessedly, we say it:

I love you.

To speak the truth of your heart takes courage.

It always has.

But please,

summon your courage,

join the parade,

and speak with conviction.

For God has been saying to the world since day one:

I love you.

What is your response?

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Post Study Notes

The following notes are provided for your personal devotion for Holy Week, Easter, and the Second Sunday of Easter

Maundy Thursday | *Wandering Heart: Streams of Mercy*

John 13:1-20 (NRSVue)

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, **4** got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. **5** Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" **7** Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." **8** Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." **9** Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" **10** Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the

feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." **11** For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. **14** So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. **16** Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. **17** If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. **18** I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' **19** I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may believe that I am he. **20** Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."

With My Outside Voice

We've been taught
to wait our turn,
to ask politely—
we do not want to appear greedy.
We've been taught:
just a pinch of salt,
just a dash of sugar,
nothing in excess.
We've been taught:
raise your hand,
keep your voice down,
no talking in church.
We've been taught to
never make a scene,
but I simply cannot abide.

I am one part questions,
two parts hunger.
I am a million prayers
and deep hope
wrapped up in one.
I am famished and hopeful,
eager and humbled.
I am using my outdoor voice inside.
I am saying,
*Not just my feet,
but my head and my hands!*
I want to go where you go.

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Good Friday | Wandering Heart: Prone the Leave the God I Love

John 13:31-38 (NRSVue)

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know

that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." ³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."

John 18:1-27 (NRSVue)

18 After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them,

"Whom are you looking for?"⁵ They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these people go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." ¹⁰ Then Simon

Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

¹² So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming

John 19:1-30 (NRSVue)

¹⁹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. ³ They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. ⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." ⁵ So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" ⁶ When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." ⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

¹⁹ Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

⁸ Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." ¹² From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against Caesar."

¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement,

or in Hebrew Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover, and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." ¹⁶ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and carrying the cross by himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." ²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them

into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,

and for my clothing they cast lots."

²⁵ And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The Next Line

There are some truths that are like the sun,
if you look at them too long they may burn you.
You may never see the same again.
And yet, nothing can grow without the sun.
So we summon our courage
and speak the truth of our lives.
We sing, *prone to leave the God I love.*
We let the honesty of those words crack our hearts in two.
We admit it to our fight-or-flight, boomerang nature,
and before the grief even begins to pass,
God is there.
God is turning toward us,
closing the distance,
inviting us to sing
the next line of the song.

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Easter Sunday | *Wandering Heart: And I Hope*

Luke 24:1-12 (NRSVue)

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands

of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Easter Morning

I cannot stay away on Easter Morning.
Like Peter,
I would run if I could.
Stop the car,
pump my arms,
take the church steps two at a time, all to
know—
Did it happen?
Did it *really* happen?
Is evil no match for love?
I'd slide down the center aisle.
I'd grab the mic to ask
the angels,
the heavens,
the children,
Were the stories true?

And in response, the choir would sing,
“Alleluia.”
The children would flower the cross.
The preacher would tell me the stone was
rolled away.
The people would pass the peace,
and welcome strangers,
and make room in the pews.
And with faith over doubt,
I would hope.

For I imagine that all of that ordinary holiness
would be enough for Peter,
and it would be enough for me.

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2nd Sunday of Easter | *Wandering Heart: Here's My Heart*

John 21:1-9 (NRSVue)

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. 2 Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him,

"No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

Here's My Heart

Inspired by "The Lanyard" by Billy Collins

As a child I made a nativity set for my mother
— pinch pot clay, uneven angel wings,
hair made with the help of a garlic press,
Joseph's staff rolled out like I was God
and it was an earthworm.

There was nothing beautiful about it,
nothing whispering of talent,
but I made it for my mother!

So I wrapped
that questionable piece of art in a box
and gave it to her
like I was handing her a Picasso.

*Here, mother,
you carried me in your womb.
You bandaged my knees when I fell.
You made soup when I was sick.
You rocked me to sleep as an infant
and sewed my costumes by hand.
In return, I made you this haphazard nativity!*

And in my childlike mind,
I thought that the small white lamb,
molded from a lumpy piece of clay,
could somehow make us even,
could somehow balance the scales,

could somehow pay her back.
And bless my mother,
because in her grace,
she smiled and she displayed that
hodge-podge nativity set
on the mantel
as if it were her pride and joy.
(I believed that it was.)

Maybe that's the way it is with God.
I say, *Here's my heart*
and God smiles.
And God takes it.
And despite the ragtag nature of my human-
hearted faith,
whatever I can give always ends up on God's
mantel.
Whatever I can give always calls for pride and
joy.

Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org ; "The Lanyard" from The Trouble with Poetry: and Other Poems by Billy Collins. (Random House, 2005)

