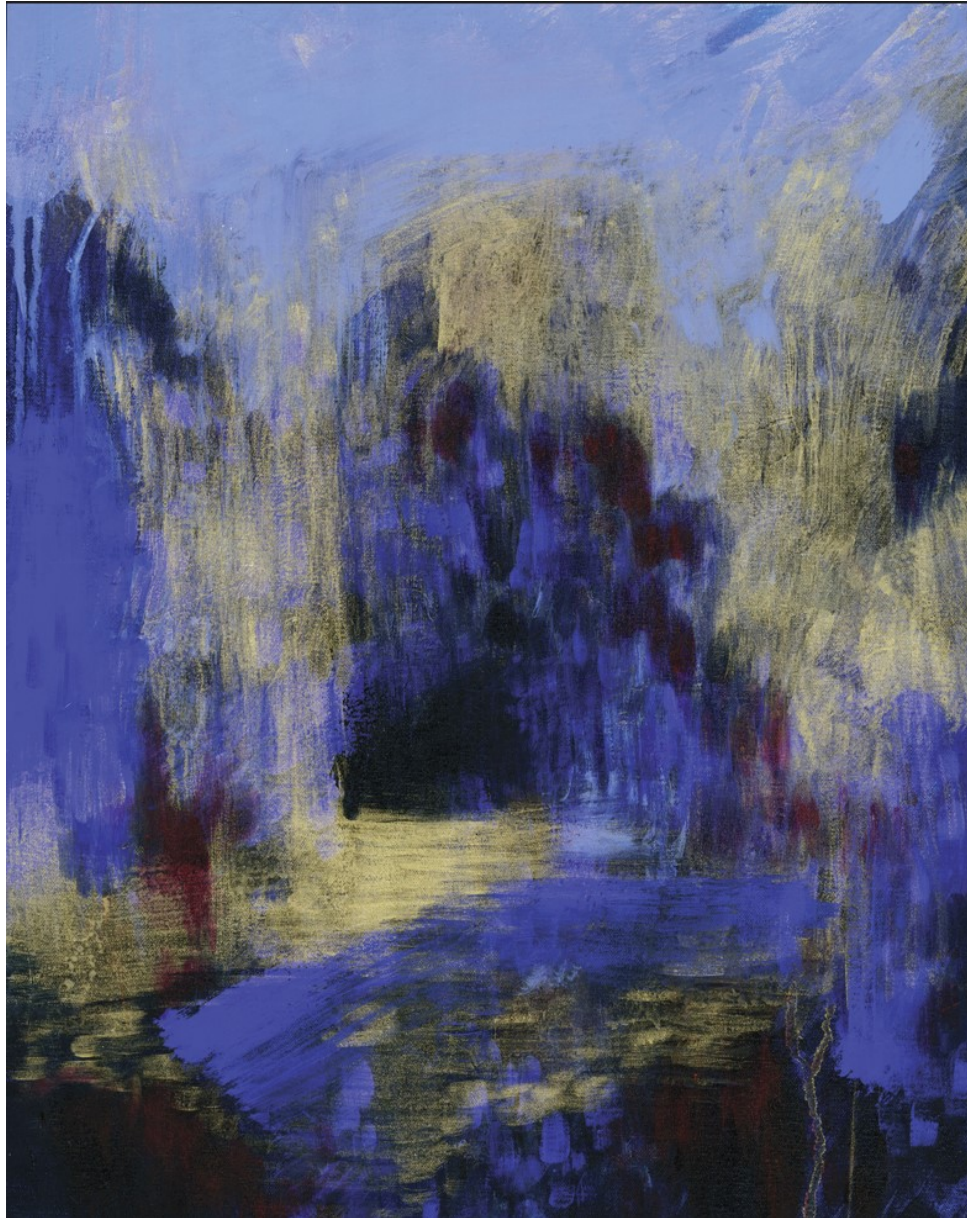


Living in God's grace we share

Mass in the Grass



The Way to Wonder by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

ALBANY OREGON

August 21, 2022

THE WAY TO WONDER (JOB'S LAMENT & LOSS)

BY LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

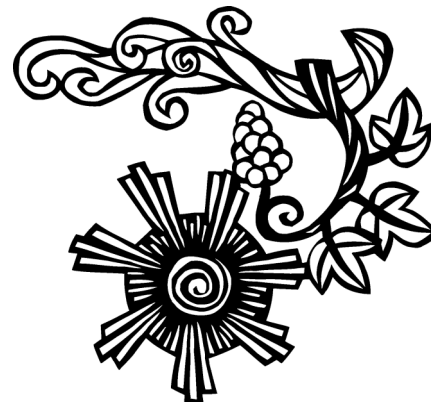
INSPIRED BY JOB 28:12-28 | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

Everything Job holds dear—his property, his family, his wealth, his physical health—has been taken from him. His life has unraveled in every way imaginable. How can we possibly make sense of the pain we endure, especially the pain we don't cause or deserve? Much of Job's journey requires him to untangle the punitive, quid pro quo theology he has absorbed. If I do good things, God will reward me. If I do bad things, God will punish me. On a cerebral level, I disagree with the logic of these words. But I remember how easily I can fall into the trap of feeling these words viscerally and bodily in moments of pain, especially in suffering that is so awful and unfair. When I first began this painting, I hoped to render Job's hymn to wisdom visually. I imagined being stuck in the deep, as if my body was anchored underwater and I was looking up to the surface. I imagined textures and symbols emerging in the swirl of the dark to portray Job's search for meaning, his grasping to find a way out. But as the painting came together, it was all wrong. The strokes and symbols were too literal, too formulaic. I almost scrapped the canvas altogether, but decided to keep going, to add more layers, more depth, more gold. A window, doorway, or portal emerged in the middle of the painting. I felt a release and realized that, while I started with lament, I ended with awe. "To fear God is wisdom" (Job 28:28). The Hebrew word for "fear," yirah, literally translates to "awesome." True wisdom lies in breathless reverence for God's mystery and expansiveness—for God's presence that is beyond what we can control, or reason, or make far too small.

— BY LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

Sunday, August 21 2022

The Way to Wonder, Job's Lament & Loss



GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: Come in from the night

C: **It is a new day, and this is where love lives. .**

P: Take off your coat, let the weight fall off your shoulders;

C: **For here, you are known. Here, you are loved.**

P: Come in from the rain.

C: **We can do anything together. We can survive together.**

P: When the world unravels from under your feet—come in.

C: **Come in.**

P: Come in.

C: **God is here. You are home. You will never be alone.**

P: Let us worship the God who weaves us together.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

P: Let us pray.

C: **Holy God, We have been angry because we see suffering and we don't understand. We have been skeptical because we know heartbreak that doesn't seem fair. We have withheld love because sacrifice only feels real when it's our own. Forgive us for forgetting that you created the heavens and the earth. Forgive us for withholding our pain from you. Forgive us for thinking that we know everything. When the world falls apart around us— When love unravels and life slowly fails— Draw us in. Show us grace; for you gave the wind its weight and you gave our bodies life. Forgive us for forgetting that. Amen.**

P: Hear the good news! God does not deal with us according to our sins but delights in granting pardon and mercy. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. You are free to love as God loves.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

P: Siblings, let us pray.

C: **God of unending surprises,
This life is a tapestry of moments woven together,
and we long to be weavers of love.
Today we gather and pray that you would unravel our bias.
Unravel our assumptions.
Unravel whatever it is that keeps us from you.
And as you do, clear space in our hearts for your Word.
We are listening. We are praying.
Amen.**

WORD

JOB 28:12-28

Everything Job holds dear—his property, his family, his wealth, his physical health—has been taken from him. Reduced to suffering and misery, Job laments his circumstances and tries to make sense of what has happened to him. How do we also seek to make meaning of our pain? Ultimately, Job discerns that God is the source of all wisdom, and to turn away from evil is to turn toward the heart of the world, which God made good.

28 ¹²"But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?
¹³Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living.
¹⁴The deep says, 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
¹⁵It cannot be gotten for gold, and silver cannot be weighed out as its price.
¹⁶It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire.
¹⁷Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
¹⁸No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls.
¹⁹The chrysolite of Ethiopia cannot compare with it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.
²⁰"Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?
²¹It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air.
²²Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'
²³"God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.
²⁴For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens.
²⁵When he gave to the wind its weight, and apportioned out the waters by measure;
²⁶when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt;
²⁷then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.
²⁸And he said to humankind, 'Truly, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.'"

A: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

HEBREWS 12:18-29

Using images of Moses, the writer presents a striking vision of the new covenant of God made possible in Christ. There is no longer fear; only awe in the new promise in Christ into which we are invited.

¹⁸You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. ²⁰(For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.” ²¹Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”) ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! ²⁶At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” ²⁷This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; ²⁹for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

A: Word of God, word of life.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: LUKE 13:10-17

P The holy gospel according to Luke.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath, offering her a new beginning for her life. When challenged by a narrow reading of the Sabbath command, Jesus responds by expanding “Sabbath work” to include setting people free from bondage.

¹⁰Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” ¹³When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.” ¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**C: I believe in God, the Great Weaver—
Who weaves us together in community,
Collecting our loose ends and turning them into belonging.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit—
Who hems us in before and behind,
Catching us when we fall and writing us into God's holy narrative.**

**And I believe in Jesus Christ—
Who loved and claimed the people society had thrown out, refusing to
disregard anyone as scrap.**

**I believe God has woven part of God's self into the fiber of our being,
Making us inherently worthy of love and belonging.**

**I believe the fabric of my life is weak,
That I am prone to error and need God's handiwork to remind me of love.**

**I believe in the Church, and that like a quilt of different fabrics,
She is designed to be as diverse and beautiful as God's creation.**

**And I believe that when life unravels,
God is there to stitch my wounds together,
To hold me in the palm of God's hand, to tell me of love,
And to invite me into a new journey. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A: Trusting in God's extraordinary love, let us come near to the Holy One in prayer.
You crown your church with steadfast love and mercy. Guide us continually in our
baptismal covenant to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Use our diverse gifts
in service to the whole people of God. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You satisfy the needs of all creatures. Protect the habitats of fish and birds. Repair
ecosystems damaged by misuse, neglect, or natural disaster, that all creation may thrive.
Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You make your ways known to all people. Inspire the rulers and leaders of nations with
your compassion and mercy. Raise up activists and community organizers to restore
places affected by violence, poverty, and inequality. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You provide justice for all who are oppressed and relief to all who are afflicted. Heal those who are bent over by addiction, depression, and anxiety. Set free all who cry out under the weight of mental, emotional, or physical distress. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You call us to delight in the Sabbath. Renew our bodies, minds, and spirits in this worshiping assembly. Give rest to all who lead our congregation in worship, study, and service. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

Other Intercessions May Be Offered

A: Generations bless your holy name. We give you thanks for the communion of saints who have gathered in prayer and praise in this place. Support us in your love until we rest forever in you. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Receive the prayers of your children, merciful God, and hold us forever in your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our holy Wisdom.

C: Amen.

PEACE

A The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

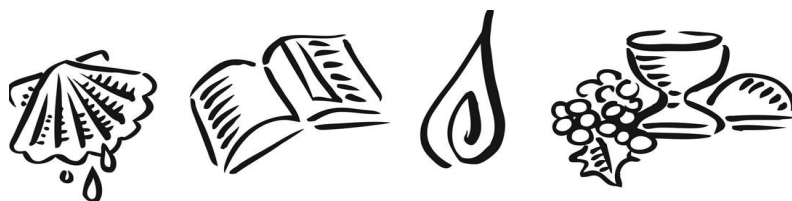
MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

**C: God of abundance:
you have set before us a plentiful harvest.
As we feast on your goodness,
strengthen us to labor in your field,
and equip us to bear fruit for the good of all,
in the name of Jesus.
Amen.**

(Free will offering will be split equally for the Laundry Love programs in Albany and Lebanon.)



GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you

C: **And also with you**

P: Lift up your hearts

C: **We lift them to the Lord**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

C: **It is right to give our thanks and praise**

SANCTUS

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise...we praise your name, and join their unending hymn:

C: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

COMMUNION INVITATION

Wherever you are, be it in the sanctuary or watching on livestream we are glad that you are joining us. We believe that Jesus gathers all believers together as the body of Christ, and that, wherever or whenever, we are communing with him and the saints that have gone before us.

After the Lord's prayer, if you are in the sanctuary, the ushers will invite you forward for the bread and the wine (red is wine, white is grape juice). If you are participating from home, this is an appropriate time to commune as well. We believe that through the meal of salvation we are all united.



EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray .

C: **Dear One, closer to us than our own hearts,
farther from us than the most distant star, you are beyond naming.**

**May your powerful presence become obvious not only in the undeniable
glory of the sky, but also in the seemingly base and common processes
of the earth.**

**Give us what we need, day by day, to keep body and soul together, because
clever as you have made us, we still owe our existence to you.**

**We recognize that to be reconciled with you, we must live peaceably and
justly with other human beings, putting hate and bitterness behind us.**

**We are torn between our faith in your goodness and our awareness of the
evil in your creation, so deliver us from the temptation to despair.**

Yours alone is the universe and all its majesty and beauty.

So it is, Amen.

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: Let us pray.

C: **Life-giving God,
through this meal you have bandaged our wounds
and fed us with your mercy.
Now send us forth to live for others,
both friend and stranger,
that all may come to know your love.
This we pray in the name of Jesus.
Amen.**

BLESSING

P: The God of peace,
Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit,
Bless you, comfort you
And show you the path of life
This day and always.

C: **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

A Go in peace. Love your neighbor.

C **Thanks be to God.**



Additional commentary on today's lesson:

*“The prosperity gospel is a theodicy, an explanation for the problem of evil. It is an answer to the questions that take our lives apart: Why do some people get healed and some people don't? Why do some people leap and land on their feet while others tumble all the way down? Why do some babies die in their cribs and some bitter souls live to see their great-grandchildren? The prosperity gospel looks at the world as it is and promises a solution. It guarantees that faith will always make a way. I would love to report that what I found in the prosperity gospel was something so foreign and terrible to me that I was warned away. But what I discovered was both familiar and painfully sweet: the promise that I could curate my life, minimize my losses, and stand on my successes. And no matter how many times I rolled my eyes at the creed's outrageous certainties, I craved them just the same. I had my own prosperity gospel, a flowering weed grown in with all the rest. Married in my twenties, a baby in my thirties, I won a job at my alma mater straight out of graduate school. I felt breathless with the possibilities. Actually, it's getting harder to remember what it felt like, but I don't think it was anything as simple as pride. It was certainty, plain and simple, that God had a worthy plan for my life in which every setback would also be a step forward. I wanted God to make me good and make me faithful, with just a few shining accolades along the way. Anything would do if hardships were only detours on my long life's journey. I believed God would make a way. I don't believe that anymore.” —Kate Bowler. *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved*. New York: Random House, 2018. xiii-xiv.*

Today's Worship Has Been Shared Between:

Faith Lutheran Church of Albany

First Christian Church of Albany

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Albany

Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Lebanon

St. Alban's Episcopal Church of Albany

St. Martin's Episcopal Church of Lebanon

* The Psalm is from *A New Metrical Psalter* by Christopher L. Webber used by permission.

**Lord's Prayer is a translation by Francis Mac Nab