

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

**Monday,
March 27, 2017**

By An Anonymous Lakeside Member

Although being born, raised, and continue to be a Baptist, I have always believed a little differently than most about how God interacts with people. I believed that God worked through people, but did not directly influenced the laws of nature that he put into place; therefore bad things did happen to good people. I must admit that most of my praying was superficial at best, and self-centered at worst. My life has pretty much been common with its usual ups and downs but nothing really serious. As I aged and came to understand the Bible a little better (There are still many questions in my mind) I began to take prayer more seriously. I guess I was waiting for that James Earl Jones or Ten Commandments voice to speak to me. Then tragedy did hit close several times in a relatively short time. Still no booming voice. Several weeks after the last heartbreak, I was sitting alone with a blank mind. I cannot tell you what the voice sounded like, just what it said: "I did not come to change your world. There will always be sadness, illness, and death there. I came to show you what my world is like. Have faith. I am here!" Needless to say, my outlook has changed dramatically.

Prayer

God, it feels rude to break the silence,
short as it was.

We had hardly begun to be quiet,
and now we are back into words.

In our search for you,
we confess that we
reflect too much,
analyze too much,
talk too much,
figuring out,
thinking aloud.

God, give us more silent space,
so we can discover the world
beyond our making.

Be the Word that comes
to dwell in the silence,
authoring sentences of calm,
paragraphs of comfort.

And help us always remember
that in silence we can know indeed
that you are God.

–Sharlande Sledge

From *Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons*

Romans 8:18-39

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.