



Leaning Into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Wednesday of Holy Week

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Leaning In . . .

By Kathy Manning

It was one year ago that I was diagnosed with mono. I had been sick for two months and had been diagnosed with a sinus infection, which I had never had, during that time. I had followed the prescribed treatment along with rest, but each time I felt like getting out again, I lapsed back into fatigue. When the test came back positive for mono, I was both relieved and distressed – relieved to have an explanation for my symptoms but distressed when I heard how long it could take to get well. I had been sailing along toward my future plans which I believed were God-guided. All of a sudden, things were coming to an abrupt halt. I felt like my life was being pulled out from under me. I couldn't drive, didn't have the energy to cook, and was drained from taking out my trash. Phone calls and e-mails became exhausting and I had to discontinue them in order to rest. At one point, I could only remain upright for the necessary activities of daily living; the rest of the time I was lying on the couch. I felt very isolated and alone. I began to wonder what had happened. How was I supposed to make sense of it? Was God trying to get my attention? Was He angry with me? Did He want me to do something I had not done? Or had He just allowed it to happen and perhaps I had played a role as well? I wanted an answer and wasn't getting one.

Then one day, I received a card in the mail that said, "You're in God's hands. What better place could you be?" With tears streaming down my face, I realized that it no longer mattered how my situation had occurred or, more importantly, why. What mattered was that I was not alone, that God was with me each day, and that He knew what I was going through. At about the same time, one of the daily readings in my devotional had these words: "Rejoice and be thankful! As you walk with Me through this day, practice trusting and thanking Me all along the way . . . Thankfulness lifts you up above your circumstances . . . Rather than planning and evaluating, practice trusting and thanking Me continually. This is a paradigm shift that will revolutionize your life." And so I began thanking God each day. I started my list in the morning when I got up – thanking Him for blue skies, sun, the birds building a nest on my patio, kind neighbors, a caring church family and my personal family, to name a few. As the day progressed, more things were added to the list. I soon learned that even in the midst of my circumstances, there were many things to be grateful for, and God was the supplier of them all.

I eventually felt that God was telling me I was going to be okay and be able to lead a normal, active life once again. I didn't know how or when. Through no action of my own, He placed a wonderful doctor in my path who helped me to get well. Even now, one year later, I can say that God has continued to work it all out for good.

In the midst of difficult and unexpected circumstances, we may try to understand and make sense of the unknown. We may never know exactly how or why circumstances have happened. What we can know, however, is that if we lean into God – into the heart of the Holy, He is there – holding us, loving us, comforting us, strengthening us, and protecting us. We're in His hands – and what better place could we be?

Prayer:

Lord God,
We tremble to think
That it was one of Jesus' own friends who betrayed him.
One who sat by him, who broke bread with him.
Give us strength, we pray,
To walk faithfully with Jesus,
Even when the road we walk is rocky,
Even when the message of the cross seems like foolishness,
And even when we feel betrayed.
You, Lord, are always faithful.
We stumble, we become lost,
But you are steady and sure.
Give us the grace to endure our troubles,
And reveal to us the glory of your kingdom,
Through your son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.
Amen. –Rachel Marie Stone

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

John 13:21-32

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival” or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.”