



Theme artwork by  
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Lent at Lakeside:  
My Heart as Sanctuary  
My Life as Prayer  
Devotion for Wednesday,  
March 7, 2018

Where I'm From  
By Elizabeth Edwards

I am from Carolina twang and Virginia brogue,  
lit with Irish fire and  
veiled in Tuscaroran shadows.

I am from the "I've passed by there on the Interstate,"  
nothing trickles down quite this far, mill town,  
pressed between a cotton loom and a paper machine  
and lingering in the whiff of  
"it smells like money to me" Southern humidity.

I am from dirt baked hard in the July sun,  
caked under our fingernails and washed off in the pond,  
eating watermelon off the tailgate,  
and riding home between bushel baskets of peas  
that will stain our thumbs green.

I am from hellfire and brimstone, can I hear an "Amen,"  
slain in the Spirit, dinner on the grounds  
(Don't get your clothes dirty!) Sundays,  
where the women with teased hair and even grander hearts  
taught memory verses and popsicle-stick crafts  
and *Jesus Wants Me For a Sunbeam*.

I am from "watch out for your brother" and "be home by supper" days,  
swirling in ponytails and handlebar streamers,  
determined not to leave any dirt on the playground.

I am from fish fries and homemade ice cream in the backyard,  
dozing on Grandma's lap while guitars invited Conway and Loretta  
to join us around the fire, and *I'll Fly Away* carried me off to sleep.

I am from waning Cold War fears, Challenger tears, and  
*I Want My MTV* pop culture meets the Moral Majority,  
set to a power ballad soundtrack.

I am from heel-to-toe halftime shows in black and gold,  
deep conversations on the meaning of life and love,  
ignited by teachers who nurtured dreams beyond this town  
and set young hearts on fire with Bunsen burners and Chaucer  
and use-your-gifts-wisely examples.

I am from "women can't be ministers" submits to  
"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,"  
standing on the shoulders of courage and call  
dressed in vestments and heels.

I am from poems, prayers, and almost-promises  
brimming from a cautiously enshrouded heart  
and searching for a crevice to set free a flicker of light.

## **2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18**

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

## Prayer

Forgive us, O God, for we have sinned. We are inattentive and clumsy with the precious gift of life. In your generosity, you give talents and energy for seeking purpose, relationships for discovering meaning, the earth and its bounty for providing comfort, and time for realizing possibility. Yet, we have not been trustworthy caretakers of your gifts.

We rush too much and rest too little,  
take too much and give too little,  
talk too much and listen too little,  
accuse too much and forgive too little,  
judge too much and love too little.

We have chipped and cracked the treasures of life, and we are broken: our relationships are broken, our hearts are broken, our lives are broken. So we bring the shattered pieces to you, Gracious God, trusting in your artistry and care to fashion something beautiful out of the mess we have made, believing that the God who created us from the dust of the earth can re-create us once again. Mold and mend us, O God, that we might form lovely and suitable vessels for carrying your healing grace to all the broken places of our world. Amen.