

THE POETRY of LENT

A Lenten Companion to
Mary Oliver's *Devotions*

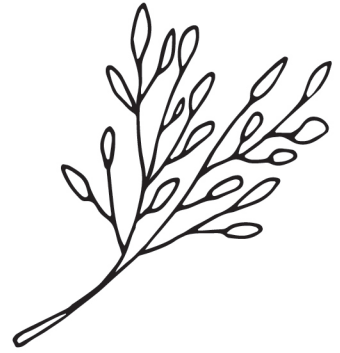


INTRODUCTION



Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.

Mary Oliver
"Sometimes," *Devotions*, p. 104



The word "Lent" comes from an old English word for "lengthen," and refers to the lengthening of those long-anticipated days of spring. With both the cross and the empty tomb approaching, the church prepares itself with forty days of fasting and reflection, all for the sake of more fully celebrating Easter's song of spring when it comes.

And so if Lent is about lengthening light, it's also about broadening our hearts and preparing the way, making room for careful attention to what matters most. As the poet Mary Oliver puts it, living well involves attention, astonishment, and testimony - and poetry itself can be a great help along the way. The best poems can help us notice the world, attuning our eyes and ears to wonders we might otherwise overlook, and inspiring us to share what we find.

In this Lenten devotional, the words of scripture and the poetry of Mary Oliver will be our guides. Each week, biblical texts and Oliver's poems illumine each other, pointing toward simple, powerful practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends, or with your congregation.

So grab your favorite Bible and a copy of *Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver* (you can also find the poems online). Week by week, we'll travel this Lenten journey together toward Easter morning - and thereby do our part, in a world so full of shadows, to help lengthen the light and welcome the joy of God's spring.

Ash WEDNESDAY

READ

Scripture

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. + Matthew 6:21

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Storage," *Devotions*, p. 7

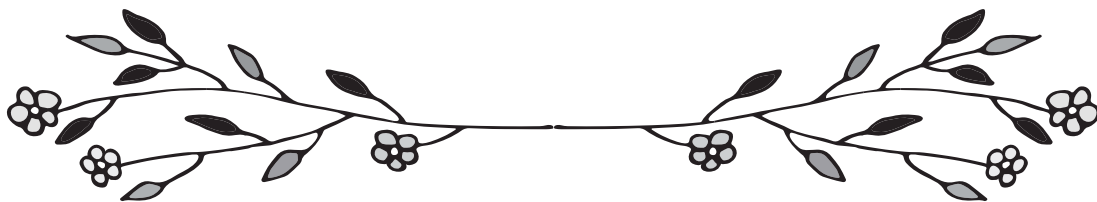
Prayer

God of dust and fire, help us lay our burdens down, so our hearts may be set right - and so we might fly! Amen.



MEDITATE

In this passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges us to examine our motives and priorities. When we pray, give alms, fast, or shop - what's really driving us? Are we secretly (even behind our own backs) trying to impress others? Are we storing up "treasures on earth," in effect placing our tender hearts in the wrong place? Like Oliver, have we become weighed down by things? Is it time to "make a beautiful fire"? How might a season of fasting from things free us to fly?

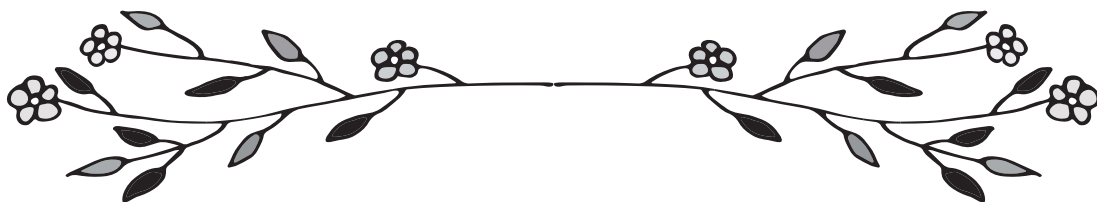


MORE LIGHT

Pair Jesus' instruction on prayer in this passage with with Oliver's "Praying" and "The Summer Day" (*Devotions*, pp. 131 and 316).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of simplicity, praying, "God of light and life, help me to focus on what's most important today. Turn my heart away from things and towards your grace and newness of life."
- † Schedule a "spring cleaning," simplifying your life by purging or donating whatever things are weighing you down - and notice the lightness and life this practice can bring!
- † Fast from buying and consuming this week. How might owning or using less make more room in your heart and reveal the goodness of God's grace? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.



FIRST SUNDAY of LENT

READ

Scripture

Mark 1:9-15

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.
+ Mark 1:15

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese," *Devotions*, p. 347

Prayer

God of life, help us change our lives. Soften our hearts.
Help us to repent, and to believe in your good news of
wild love and grace. Amen.



MEDITATE

The baptism-in-the-wilderness by John was about repentance, and Jesus' preaching was, too. In Mark's original Greek, the word for repentance is *metanoia*, from *meta* ("change") and *noia* ("mind"); today we might say, "change of heart," or "change of life." Oliver claims that this kind of change doesn't flow from self-defeating guilt but rather from incarnate, wild, imaginative love for the world. So: what "change of life" is God calling you toward today, nipping at your heels like a wild goose, that ancient Celtic image for the Holy Spirit?



MORE LIGHT

For more on the holy wildness of love, human and divine, see Oliver's "Wild, Wild" (*Devotions*, p. 156).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of repentance, praying, "God of mercy, help me change my life; let me love today with a wild and imaginative love, on earth as it is in heaven."
- † Schedule a "wilderness walk," listening for how God may be calling you to change.
- † Reach out online or in person to an organization changing the world in inspiring ways, and learn more about their work, their impact, and how you can get involved.
- † Power down, take a breath, look out a window, and experiment with journaling this week. What changes are you making (or would you like to make) to be more in tune with God's good news? Explore this question with someone you love.



— SECOND SUNDAY of LENT —



READ

Scripture

Mark 8:27-38

For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? + Mark 8:36

Poem

Mary Oliver, "In Blackwater Woods," *Devotions*, p. 389

Prayer

God of grace, help us to love what is mortal. Give us the courage to hold it close and, when the time comes, to let it go. Amen.



MEDITATE

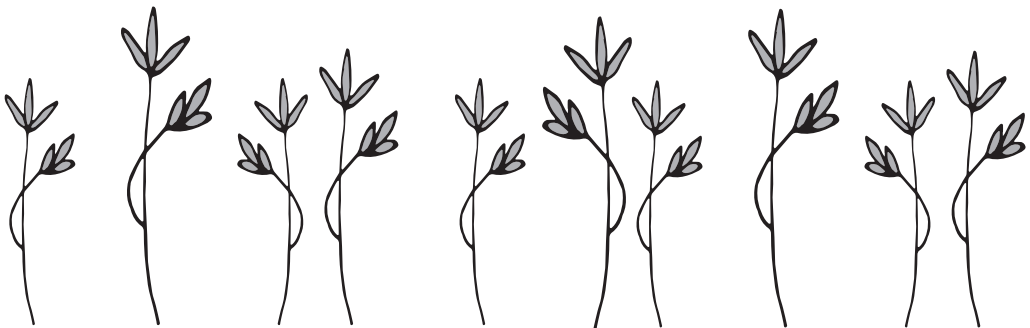
This passage in Mark is full of mysteries, and at its core is how salvation somehow involves both losing one's life and saving it. Jesus warns that there are ways to "gain the whole world" and yet still lose your life; and at the same time he promises that God works through loss in order to save. With Oliver, we can see these mysteries unfold in the natural world - and in our own lives - through the ancient rhythms of giving and receiving, losing and saving, holding on and letting go.

MORE LIGHT

For wisdom on how “losing one’s life” should never mean merely succumbing to the needs of others, see Oliver’s “The Journey” (*Devotions*, p. 349); and for her take on Jesus, love, mystery, and miracles, see “Logos” (*Devotions*, p. 179).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of salvation, praying, “God of grace, help me love what is mortal. Help me hold on to what needs to be embraced, let go of what needs to be let go – and have the wisdom to know the difference.”
- † Experiment with a “letting go” fast this week, creating little sanctuaries of Sabbath time. Try fasting from technology for an hour, a day, or the whole week; or create a mealtime “Sabbath box” for cell phones or other devices, so you can better taste and see how God is good!
- † Reach out to someone living an “all-in” life of service, and thank them for their commitment and inspiration. Schedule an outdoor get together or Zoom meeting to learn more about their work and how you can help.
- † Make a list of what you need to embrace and to release in order to live more fully. Make the list itself beautiful (handwrite it on special paper; illuminate initial letters like an ancient manuscript; whatever works!) and put it up somewhere you’ll see it every day. Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.



— THIRD SUNDAY of LENT —

READ

Scripture

John 2:13-25

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. + John 2:15

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Where Does the Temple Begin, Where Does It End?" *Devotions*, p. 186

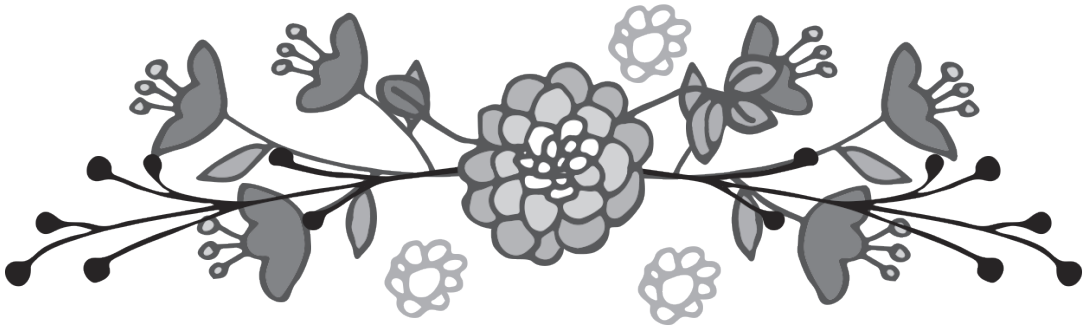
Prayer

God of justice, help us to protect the vulnerable with wisdom and audacity. Show us your true temple. Amen.



MEDITATE

Here Jesus is filled with fierce and righteous anger. Why? Because the temple - "my Father's house" - has been desecrated by a crass form of profiteering. Jesus' love for the temple runs deep, and he challenges us not only to feel the same but also to ask where the boundaries of "the temple" really are. Does the sacred ground end at the sanctuary door? Or does it include the woods, the birds, and the sky, as both Oliver and Genesis 1 would suggest? Does the temple include Christ's own body, and so all of our bodies as well (John 2:21)? And if it does: how shall we fiercely love and defend "the temple" today?



MORE LIGHT

For another exploration of both the world's desecration and righteous anger, see Oliver's "Tecumseh" (*Devotions*, p. 387).

PRACTICES

- + This week begin each day by lighting a candle of courage, praying, "God of love, help me live today in ways that consecrate the world, defend the vulnerable, protect what is good, and honor creation."
- + Experiment with a "creation care" fast this week: walking or biking to work or school; using less electricity, water, or toxic chemicals; or eating vegetarian or vegan meals this week (or for the rest of your life!).
- + Write a letter for Amnesty International or another advocacy group.
- + What does "righteous anger" look like in the world and in your own life? Where is your temple, the place or time or way you sense God's presence? Explore these questions in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.

— FOURTH SUNDAY of LENT —

READ

Scripture

John 3:14-21

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. + John 3:17

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Some Questions You Might Ask," *Devotions*, p. 313

Prayer

God of all creation, help us to see the world you have made, the world you mean to save. Show us the breadth of your love! Amen.



MEDITATE

Jesus speaks here of both grace and judgment, but his emphasis is on grace: after all, in Numbers 21 the bronze serpent Moses lifted up saved all the afflicted Israelites, not just a few; and likewise, God's Son came not to condemn the world but "in order that the world might be saved." Oliver's poem can be read as a provocative, playful riff picking up on the striking fact that Jesus does not say, "in order that all people might be saved." For aren't the bear and the hummingbird, the snake and the scallop, the iris and maple tree included among God's beloved?

MORE LIGHT

For another meditation on the nature of salvation and “the path to heaven,” see Oliver’s “The Swan” (*Devotions*, p. 331).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of grace, praying, “God of mercy and hope, help me expand the circle of those I love.”
- † Look for moments - a conversation, a Facebook post, a phone call - in which you might be tempted to offer words of judgment, and instead offer words of grace and understanding.
- † Learn something new about a creature you know little about - perhaps even one you don’t like! Share what you learn with at least one other person, or post it for others to enjoy.
- † Where does your circle of love need to be expanded? Explore these questions in a journal, or discuss with family and friends in person or online.



FIFTH SUNDAY of LENT

READ

Scripture

Jeremiah 31:27-34

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

+ Jeremiah 31:33

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Mindful," *Devotions*, p. 173

Prayer

God of wonder and delight, help us notice the miraculous, today and every day. Write your law on our hearts. Amen.



MEDITATE

What if God's law were "written on our hearts"? Instruction would no longer be needed, since genuine joy and praise, compassion and justice would all be second nature. The prophet Jeremiah declares that such days "are surely coming;" in the meantime, we may learn from the Spirit through a thousand teachers all around us. To walk with Oliver is to join her in this kind of mindful day-to-day learning, all for the sake of that day when instruction is no longer necessary.

MORE LIGHT

For variations on the theme of mindfulness and learning from the ordinary wonders of the world, see Oliver's "This Morning" and "To Begin With, the Sweet Grass" (*Devotions*, pp. 4 & 76).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of mindfulness, praying, "God of wonder and delight, help me notice the miraculous today."
- † Try what renowned preacher Fred Craddock calls "going marveling": an afternoon or evening walk to gather marvels (sights, sounds, shells, stones, flowers, pine cones - anything that brings to mind God's marvelous generosity!). Post a photo of your discoveries on Facebook or Instagram.
- † Experiment with a "mindfulness fast" this week, setting aside things and activities that create undue distraction and stress: television, the news cycle, your Twitter feed - whatever threatens to pull you out of the present moment.
- † Where and when would you like to be more mindful (the homefront, your commute, the natural world, relationships, parenting, etc.)? Explore these questions in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.

PALM SUNDAY

READ

Scripture

Mark 11:1-11

Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. + Mark 11:2

Poem

Mary Oliver, "The Poet Thinks about the Donkey," *Devotions*, p. 130

Prayer

God of glory, help us to see how you shine in the most humble of creatures. Open our ears to the hosannas all around us - and help us to join in and sing! Amen.



MEDITATE

Jesus was skilled student and faithful lover of scripture, and here in a kind of street theater he enacts a passage from the ancient prophet Zechariah. The crowds fully participate in the performance, lavishing praise on the triumphant king, "humble and riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). Oliver zeroes in on the donkey himself, the humble creature carrying the humble savior, calling our attention to how even the most "lowly" can play indispensable roles in the grand drama of salvation, in Jerusalem and beyond.

MORE LIGHT

For a deeper dive into the jubilation of Palm Sunday, see these two poems on praise: “The Chat” and “Just Lying on the Grass at Blackwater” (*Devotions*, pp. 139 & 163).

PRACTICES

- † This week begin each day by lighting a candle of praise, praying, “God of glory, God of love, help me praise you today in all I do and say.”
- † Text three people today with words of praise and encouragement.
- † Experiment with a “criticism fast,” refraining from disparaging yourself and others, thereby making room for words of support and appreciation.
- † For what in your life (big things and little things) do you most want to praise God? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss in person or online with family and friends.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

READ

Scripture

John 13:1-35

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. + John 13:5

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Singapore," *Devotions*, p. 326

Prayer

God of love, help deepen and strengthen our love, for you and for our neighbors. Make our love as simple and as beautiful as a bowl full of water. Amen.



MEDITATE

What does genuine love look like in practice? Here Jesus teaches his disciples that it looks like humble, tangible, vulnerable service: foot-washing illustrates his new commandment to "love one another, as I have loved you" ("Maundy" is from an old word for "mandate" or command). Likewise, Oliver's chance encounter with a woman cleaning a restroom becomes a window into how dignity and humility intertwine, and how "light can shine out of a life." And so the question is this: how can we make our love more tangible, more luminous, more clear?

MORE LIGHT

Tonight, Jesus will pray in the Garden of Gethsemane; to follow him there, see Oliver's "Gethsemane" (*Devotions*, p. 129).

PRACTICES

- † Today light a candle of love, praying, "God of love, help my love become more tangible, more luminous, more clear today - and every day."
- † Reach out to someone who has been kind to you, and express your appreciation face to face (online counts!) or with a note.
- † Wash the hands or feet of a family member; make someone a meal; give a pet a special treat; or put up a new birdfeeder.
- † How can your love become more tangible, more concrete, more incarnate? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.



GOOD FRIDAY

READ

Scripture

John 18:1-19:42

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. + John 19:16-17

Poem

Mary Oliver, "Lead," *Devotions*, p. 146

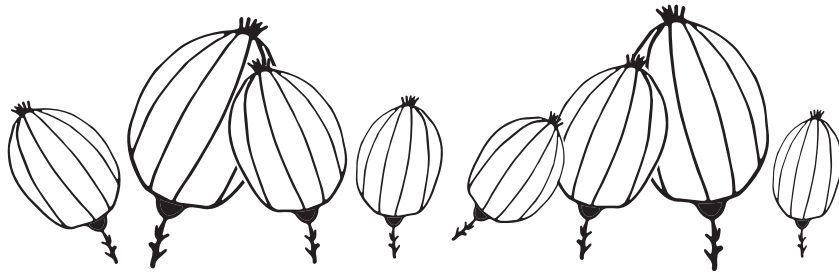
Prayer

God of sorrows, help us follow you to the foot of your cross, and so to the foot of every cross, everywhere. Let our hearts be broken open. Have mercy on us. Amen.



MEDITATE

Why do we call this Friday "good"? Is it because Jesus shows us love and mercy even unto death? Is it because the cross declares God's solidarity with all those who suffer, or that God has canceled every debt? Is it because Jesus subversively transforms some of the worst things in the world (the Roman cross, violence, hate crime, betrayal among friends) into some of the best things in the world (the Tree of Life, grace, resurrection, forgiveness among enemies) - thereby proclaiming that in the end, God will redeem everything? Is it because, as Oliver puts it, this story will break our hearts open, never to close again to the rest of the world?

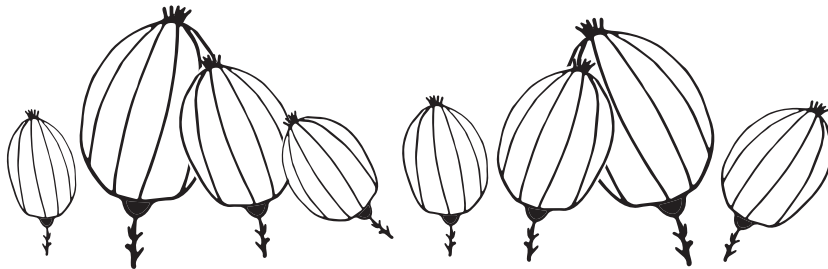


MORE LIGHT

Pair these readings with Oliver's "Poppies," a meditation on the power of life over loss and death (*Devotions*, p. 291).

PRACTICES

- † Today light a candle of sorrow, praying, "God of mercy, forgive us. Break our hearts open, never to close again to the rest of the world."
- † Reach out to someone who has sorrow in his or her life today.
- † How can the suffering and death of Jesus open our hearts to suffering and death in the world around us? Explore this question in a journal, or discuss it with someone you love.



EASTER SUNDAY

READ

Scripture

Mark 16:1-8

And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. + Mark 16:2

Poems

Mary Oliver, "Morning Poem" and "Swan,"
Devotions, pp. 345 & 62

Prayer

Risen and rising God, help us dare to pray,
dare to rise, dare to be a blazing lilly this
morning, and every morning.
Hallelujah! Amen.



Lectionary Texts & Poems

Mary Oliver & The Poetry of Lent

The First Sunday of Lent

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

WILD GEESE

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting, over
and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

The Second Sunday of Lent

Mark 8:31-38

Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

IN BLACKWATER WOODS

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars
of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,
the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders
of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is
nameless now.

Every year
everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side
is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

The Third Sunday of Lent

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

WHERE DOES THE TEMPLE BEGIN, WHERE DOES IT END?

There are things you can't reach. But
you can reach out to them, and all day long.
The wind, the bird flying ~way. The idea of God.
And it can keep you as busy as anything else, and happier.
The snake slides away; the fish jumps, like a little lily,
out of the water and back in; the goldfinches sing
from the unreachable top of the tree.
I look; morning to night I am never done with looking.
Looking I mean not just standing around, but standing around
as though with your arms open.
And thinking: maybe something will come, some
shining coil of wind,
or a few leaves from any old tree they
are all in this too.
And now I will tell you the truth.
Everything in the world
comes.
At least, closer.
And, cordially.
Like the nibbling, tinsel-eyed fish; the unlooping snake.
Like goldfinches, little dolls of gold
fluttering around the corner of the sky
of God, the blue air.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

John 3:14-21

Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so

that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

Is the soul solid, like iron?

Or is it tender and breakable, like
the wings of a moth in the beak of the owl?

Who has it, and who doesn't?

I keep looking around me.

The face of the moose is as sad
as the face of Jesus.

The swan opens her white wings slowly.

In the fall, the black bear carries leaves into the darkness.

One question leads to another.

Does it have a shape? Like an iceberg?

Like the eye of a hummingbird?

Does it hav~ one lung, like the snake and the scallop?

Why should I have it, and not the anteater
who loves her children?

Why should I have it, and not the camel?

Come to think of it, what about the maple trees?

What about the blue iris?

What about all the little stones, sitting alone in the moonlight?

What about roses, and lemons, and their shining leaves?

What about the grass?

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

MINDFUL

Every day
I see or I hear
something
that more or less
kills me
with delight,
that leaves me
like a needle
in the haystack
of light.

It is what I was born for
to look, to listen,
to lose myself
inside this soft world-to
instruct myself
over and over
in joy,
and acclamation.

Nor am I talking
about the exceptional,
the fearful, the dreadful,
the very extravagant-but
of the ordinary,
the common, the very drab,
the daily presentations.

Oh, good scholar,
I say to myself,
how can you help
but grow wise
with such teachings
as these –
the untrimmable light
of the world,
the ocean's shine,
the prayers that are made
out of grass?

Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

THE POET THINKS ABOUT THE DONKEY

On the outskirts of Jerusalem

the donkey waited.

Not especially brave, or filled with understanding,
he stood and waited.

*How horses, turned out into the meadow,
leap with delight!*

*How doves, released from their cages,
clatter away, splashed with sunlight.*

But the donkey, tied to a tree as usual, waited.

Then he let himself be led away.

Then he let the stranger mount.

Never had he seen such crowds!

And I wonder if he at all imagined what was to happen.

Still, he was what he had always been: small, dark, obedient.

I hope, finally, he felt brave.

I hope, finally, he loved the man who rode so lightly upon him,
as he lifted one dusty hoof and stepped, as he had to, forward.