

Resurrection: The Only Clear Thing

Easter 6

May 17, 2020

First Reading ~ *Genesis 37: 12-28*

Now Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" — that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed.

When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And the Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt.

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Richard Rohr in "Grieving As Sacred Space: How Anxious and Ambiguous Times May Offer Up The Most Holy of Gifts (2002)*

"Limina" is the Latin word for threshold, the space betwixt and between. Liminal space, therefore, is a unique spiritual position where human beings hate to be, but where the biblical God is always leading them. It is when you have left the "tried and true" but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are finally out of the way. It is when you are in between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. It is no fun. Think of Israel in the desert, Joseph in the pit, Jonah in the belly, the three Marys tending the tomb.

If you are not trained in how to hold anxiety, how to live with ambiguity, how to entrust and wait - you will run - or more likely, you will "explain." Not necessarily a true

explanation, but any explanation is better than scary liminal space. Anything to flee from this terrible "cloud of unknowing. Those of a more fear-based nature will try to run back to the old ways, the old explanations, or will often quickly construct a new explanation, one where they can feel special and again in control. Few know how to stay on the threshold. You just feel strange there.

Everything genuinely new emerges in some kind of liminal space.

Third Reading ~ "My Eyes So Soft", by Haifez (1350-1390)

Don't surrender your loneliness
So quickly.
Let it cut more deep.

Let it ferment and season you
As few human
Or even divine ingredients can.

Something missing in my heart tonight
Has made my eyes so soft,
My voice
So tender,

My need of God
So absolutely
Clear.