

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 86.1-10, 16-17 [Worship]

1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. 2 Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; 3 be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long. 4 Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you. 6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication. 7 In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me. 8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. 9 All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. 10 For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving girl. 17 Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame, because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Consider: Shelley Douglass [Think & Pray...]

These are frightening readings. They prepare us for the Holy Spirit and for God's movement, a movement of mercy and compassion that will put us in conflict with our world.

When we have experienced God's mercy and love, we see those around us with God's loving eyes. We are forced to speak words of justice, words of peace. We have to act on those words.

Somewhere in this process we walk smack into a brick wall: our fear, our friends' opinions, our family's security. Something is too important to risk. A choice: We can be silent

and feel our very bones burn with the fire of God until we are misshapen, or we can endure the burning of truth in our selves.

These readings are meant to reassure us, but they fail: Who wants to lay down their life? Baptismal death is comfortably symbolic; we'd prefer to leave it that way.

To *really* lay down our lives, we risk what is most precious to us. It is a real risk. Marriages end, parents and children are estranged, livelihoods are lost or damaged—not to mention jail sentences served, beatings endured, lives lost. Jesus doesn't promise to keep our lives comfortable. He promises just the opposite: We will walk into the wall.

The comfort is not that we won't die, but that if we die for his sake we will live again. Like Jesus we will live a transformed life. We cannot know as we begin to act what the outcome will be. We can only know that as we respond to the mercy shown us by showing mercy, we invite the death of our former selves. And we believe—sometimes barely—that when the dust has settled we will be acknowledged by Jesus, and will regain our lives.

[The Scripture]



Romans 6.1b-11

1b Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by

baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.