



Wonder

Reflect on the word Wonder. Take a few moments to think, to hope and to pray about how God might create wonder in your life. How might your reflection shape you, change you and join you and Christ together? After you have taken a few minutes to reflect here, turn the page and read further.

Monday of Holy Week

March 29, 2010

Invocation

What a joy it is to see the world anew
through the eyes of a young child, where
the song of a bird... a pill bug under a stone...
dandelion sees blowing in the air...
are greeted as excited discovery.
In the ordinary events of our everyday lives, O God,
help us to be open to discerning the extraordinary
surprises of your loving presence.
Amen.

- Dr. William Longworth

Reflection

The first three gospels give an account of people bringing infants and little children to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to bother Jesus with such trivia. But Jesus called for them to bring the kids, saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." What does that mean—to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child?" Reflect on what that means in your own life. Some might point to the sense of dependency of a child and our dependence on God. Some might consider the unconditional acceptance of others that little children seem to possess and Jesus' call to that level of acceptance. While both of those meanings must certainly be part of what Jesus meant, surely he also was calling us back to that child-like sense of wonder.

When our oldest daughter was about 2 ½, we were camping along the shore of Lake Ouachita in late August. A cold front came through during the night and the next morning when we stepped out of the tent we were greeted with the beautiful sight of the lake shrouded in a low fog covering the surface. She exclaimed with delight, "There's smoke on the swimming pool!" Do you remember how to see the world through the eyes of a two-year-old or a four-year-old? Have you been hurrying along, child in tow, and have to stop to watch a caterpillar devouring a leaf or a cicada emerging from its shell, held fast to the bark of a tree? Have you played

20 Questions with a two-year old whose every question is "Why?" to every answer you give?

What about your own sense of wonder: Have you stood on the summit of a mountain and been awed by the sight of the sun setting across the valley, pulling its light over the edge, as the darkness follows like a blanket covering the valley for the night? Have you stopped to inspect the first buds on a branch as life springs forth again? Have you contemplated the depth and height of the love of God seen clearly in Jesus? Have you been lost in wonder at the magnificent grace of God? Have you slowed down enough to recognize and appreciate the wonder of life itself?

Hymn

*"I sing the almighty power of God, that made the mountains
rise, that spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full of God's command, and all the stars obey."*

- I Sing the Almighty Power of God, United Methodist Hymnal #152

Benediction

*May you be enriched by your observance of Lent,
and may God fill your heart and mind with
wisdom, love and understanding. Amen.*

Your reflections...

Tuesday of Holy Week

March 30, 2009

"Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers.'"

– Mark 11:15-17

What amazing courage it must have taken for Jesus to "Kickoff Holy Week" by literally kicking the money changers out of the Temple! I wonder if a part of him wanted to peacefully and positively enter the Temple and thank everyone for their efforts. I wonder if he wished he could simply "work the room" and "press the flesh" and then go enjoy a banquet in his honor. Perhaps the humanity of Jesus wished these things – but the divinity of Christ could not allow that! Jesus was "God among us", so his mission was quite different. And thank goodness it was....because we human beings desperately need authentic places of worship! It doesn't matter if it is a downtown cathedral, or a tiny country church, or a simple chapel located in a hospital. We need to be able to worship in a focused environment. We need to leave the clutter of the world behind us....and replace it with the wonder of true worship.

When you ponder the wonders of Christ's love, do you hope for something new in your life? What wonders is God creating in your life?

Your reflections . . .

Wednesday of Holy Week

March 31, 2010

"As he taught, he said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'"

– Mark 12:38-40

The Gospels record a variety of teaching opportunities that Jesus took advantage of during the final week of his life. This one must have made the scribes absolutely crazy! They were called out by Jesus for using religion as a means of benefit and privilege. Can you imagine their reaction? "How dare you question how we dress? How dare you second guess where we sit in banquets? Who are you to criticize the length of our prayers? Apparently you don't realize that WE ARE PROFESSIONALS HERE!" Jesus knew that was precisely the problem – too many people were "pros" at twisting the nature and purpose of worship and devotion to God. They played the game for all the wrong reasons – beginning and ending with their comfort and prestige. Ironically, we all find so much more happiness when we take the approach of "amateurs" who play the game of life with humility, simplicity, purity, wonder, and a genuine desire to be in communion with God and in service to others!

As you journey through this holiest of weeks, take some time to consider your Lenten journey. Have you experienced God working in your life? Have you taken some action that fostered God in your life?

Your reflections . . .

Thursday of Holy Week

April 1, 2010

"While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'"

– Mark 14:22-24

Do you ever wonder what the disciples must have been thinking when Jesus initiated the Lord's Supper? I wonder, but I cannot fully imagine. How could we know their surprise? How could we anticipate their questions? And how could we feel the absolute intimacy of these moments? Jesus "bared his soul" in front of them by offering them the core of his being. He spoke to them of his body and his blood, for they were the symbols of his humanity. He used the essence of his life to draw them together in his eternal nature. He was tenderly and lovingly forming them into a family. And he does the same for each of us. We can feel his presence when we receive the bread and taste the cup. If we listen carefully, we can hear the voice of Christ in the imagination of our hearts, as if he were saying to us: "Taste my body – drink from my cup – what I have and who I am, I offer freely to you!" Jesus honors us with the gift of the Lord's Supper....and we honor our Lord with our acceptance of his humble life and his wondrous love.

What wonder is this – that God loves us so abundantly? Is it possible that God can create such abundant love in us? What could you do to create more love in your life?

Your reflections. . .

Good Friday

April 2, 2010

"Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'"

– Mark 15:37-39

Immediately before this passage, we are told that a strange darkness replaced the sunlight of Good Friday. From noon until 3 p.m. there was nothing that could be seen in all the known world....and then it happened! "Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last." His death must have been heard first, and then later seen. It must have been a thundering sound, unlike anything ever heard before. Slowly, the darkness lifted. I wonder who saw Jesus first – that is, saw him for who he truly was. I wonder if it was his mother, or a grieving disciple or a repentant Pharisee. I wonder if it was someone who had followed him for a lifetime. However, it is Mark 15:39 that tells us: it was the centurion, standing by the side of Jesus, who was the first to say, "Truly this man was God's Son!" The darkness lifted and a simple bystander proclaimed the Good News of the Gospel - the good news that the entire world can recognize the face of God in the wondrous sacrifice of love!

Take some time today to visualize the death of Jesus on Good Friday. What feelings did you experience? How can your feelings create something new in you?

Your reflections. . .

Holy Saturday

April 3, 2010

"When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."

– Mark 15:42-43

"Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid."

– Mark 15:46-4

We live in a world where there is potential for goodness to follow tragedy. We see it in our personal lives and we see it on the world's stage. We have seen it for weeks now in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake. People have used the newest gifts of technology and the age-old gift of compassion to reach out across the world to a nation in dire need. We will need to rise to the occasion for years to come – and surely as people of faith we will! The world family can take its cue from the example of good souls – like Joseph of Arimathea. He had experienced a horror beyond imagination, but he did not run and hide. He carefully and lovingly took care of the body of Jesus. And then he "passed the baton" to two other good souls – Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus. They saw what Joseph did and they knew what they would do.... when the night was gone, and when the light had returned – they would come to Jesus, and be the first to witness the events of an amazing and wondrous story! It is our story as well – may we learn it, embrace it, and never forget.

How does this story guide you in witnessing to your faith? Where will you go and what will you do?

Your reflections. . .

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2010

Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines: *Celebration*

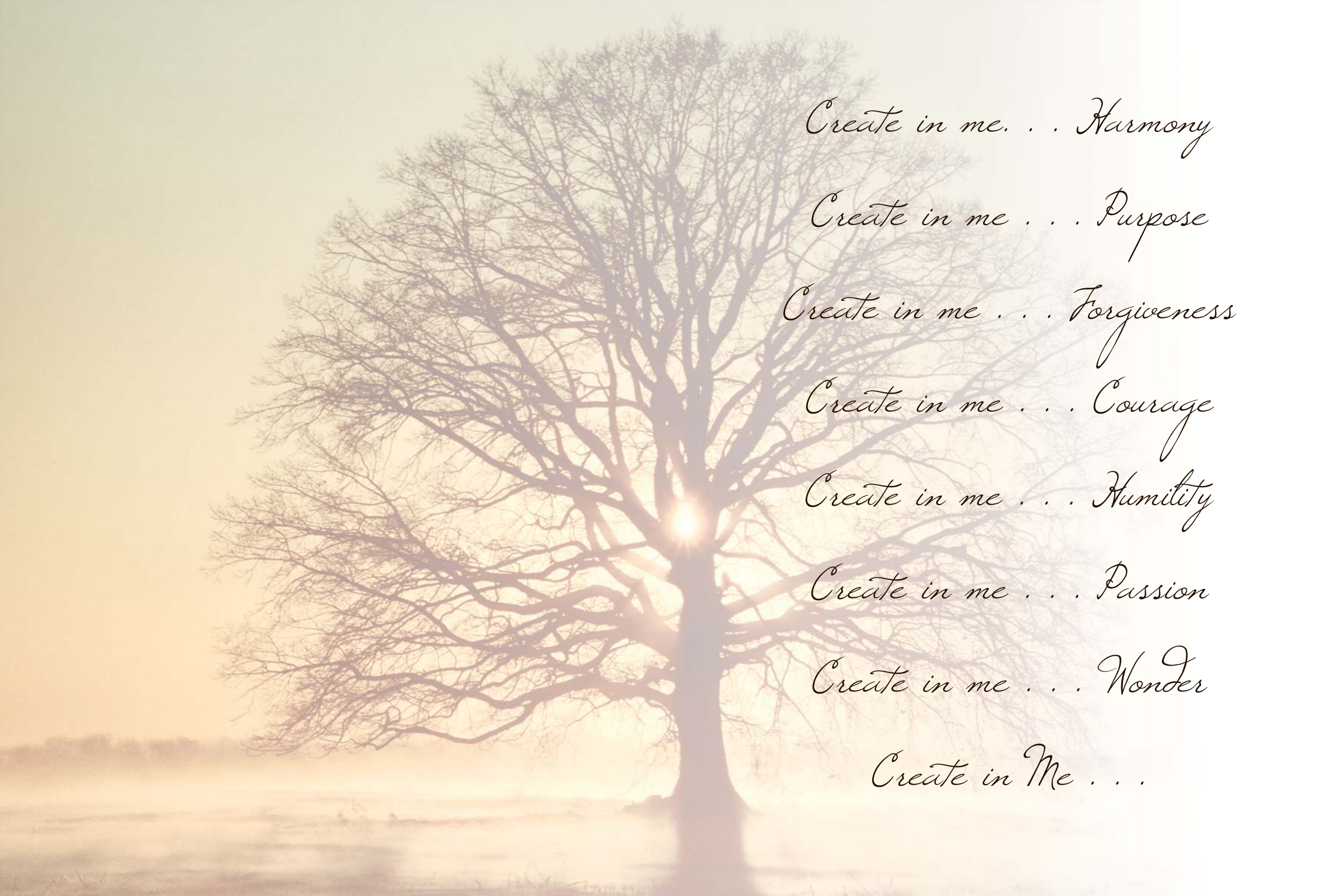
On Easter Sunday, we lift up the spiritual discipline of celebration.

Hymn

*"Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!"*

*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,
United Methodist Hymnal, #302*

As we have journeyed through Lent towards the Cross, we have empathized with Christ's temptations by battling our own. We remember the anguish that Jesus felt in his supplication to His father the night before His death. And now, on Easter Sunday we can celebrate the power of the Resurrection of Christ. As we learn to trust that God will have the final word, we begin to see ourselves in proper relationship to God's total creation and are freed to life of joyful obedience.



Create in me . . . Harmony

Create in me . . . Purpose

Create in me . . . Forgiveness

Create in me . . . Courage

Create in me . . . Humility

Create in me . . . Passion

Create in me . . . Wonder

Create in Me . . .