

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him. "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "as the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah: and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the Ammorites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you says the Lord, I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

In his book, "From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms", Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann describes one of our closely held worlds. He wrote: "It is all too much. And so, as a result, we are all too happy to press the delete button labeled amnesia: "If only I could blank all of that out. I can live now, in this moment, in the world immediately in front of me. There is so much I cannot afford to remember about misjudgment and exhibits of my dark side, and the dark side of our common life, of Me Lai, of Auschwitz, of Hiroshima, and of the common legacy of slavery. I do not want to know anymore about the atrocities committed by my government on my behalf. I do not want to think anymore about the fraud of food and drug labeling and the ways in which big money works invisibly to shape my life. I do not want to worry anymore about the scars of slavery and the burns of napalm. I do not want to be reminded of the ovens of Poland or the walls in Israel or Arizona. I do not want to know how many gay people there are, or how many young women are sold every day into sex slavery. I do not want to hear about the violence in our prisons. I just want to sing songs of joy and happiness—praise songs that have no narrative to remind us of anything beyond this particular moment of pious good will and non-memory." Sometimes we prefer "don't ask, don't tell" amnesia. "Don't tell me, and I will not ask, and I will get through the day in my isolated innocence." But Moses said over and over, "Take heed lest you forget." But we do want to forget and not bear the hurt of all the misadventure that continues in our common life. It is enough to be here and now in my family and my little tribe, gladly disconnected from all else (p. 13-14).

Because it was all too much for Jews, in King David's time the chosen people of God climbed up the temple steps in the Holy City of Jerusalem to remember how it wasn't too much for YAHWEH. With their minds filled with their songs of faith they entered the game changing world of the Holy One by praying together the psalms which recounted God's transformation action in their history. By entering in the counter-world of the psalms the Spirit of the Living God became immediately present to each worshipping soul. Several of the psalms emerged as favorites for reconnecting amnesia folks with Divine miracles. After a long recital of great deeds done by God, Psalm 105 ends

in verse 45 with “in order that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws.” The purpose of remembering here is to awaken the practice of obedience to the Ten Commands of Moses. In Psalm 106, after recounting YAHWEH’s covenantal faithfulness and Israel’s confession of recurring infidelity, the prayer ends in verse 47 with: *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.* The purpose of recounting the time when God brought exiled Jews home from captivity in a foreign land was to remind ‘It’s All Too Much’ amnesia folk to call upon God in their time of need, to rescue them. And, ‘In psalm 136, the whole history of God’s miraculous intervention in history is again recited, punctuated this time with the repeated refrain, “for his steadfast love endures forever”. All of Israel’s history, indeed all of world history is an arena that exhibits God’s abiding fidelity’ (p. 24-25).

Obedience, rescue, and fidelity (the steadfast love of God that endures forever) are the same gifts of the spirit that we, who religiously walk up the church steps every Sunday morning to kneel before the throne of grace, need to transform our “It’s All Too Much” amnesia. In our Sunday liturgy communal praying of psalms remains as a central spiritual practice for remembering the miraculous works of God. In our worship of God, the singing of hymns of our faith is another way of lively remembrance of covenantal obedience. We all have our favorites, but I’ve taken a liking to the words from, “God Marked a Line and Told the Sea” --- a scripturally based new-comer from Job 38:1-11 and Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 (1986) “It was written” commented author Thomas Troeger, “as a polemical poem to counter spurious ideas of freedom as undisciplined license, and to affirm how the profoundest liberty involves a sense of boundaries and structure.”

Also in our worship a lively remembrance of God’s rescue comes from Biblical stories. Today we heard about the game changing moment in King David’s life when the prophet Nathan told the rich man parable and split the king’s heart in two with God’s finger pointing word: “You are the man.” In her sermon on

this narrative, Barbara Brown Taylor commented: ‘There does seem to be an ancient understanding that while God has given us total freedom to decide how we will live, God has also set boundaries on that freedom. So there are moral limits we trespass at our own risk . . . there are realities governing our life together that we cannot go up against without sooner or later discovering the consequences. When we do discover them---as individuals, as a community, as a nation--- God does not turn away from us. God sends us prophets to wake us up, to tell us stories that show us who we really are. If we are lucky enough to feel our hearts split in two, then we may find that even the death sentences we have pronounced upon ourselves are lifted, because the recognition of sin is the beginning of the end of it. The moment we know we are lost and say so out loud, God can hear us to find us and take us home’ (Bread of Angels, p. 15-16).

And, we have a lively remembrance of the steadfast love of God that endures forever through our relationship with “It’s All Too Much” for me Sunday going to meeting folk whose amnesia has been lifted through the amazing grace of God. In her devotional on verse 25 from psalm 78 ---*Mortals ate of the bread of angels, God sent them food in abundance*---Rev. Arnold reflected: ‘The Psalmist remembers the wilderness years of his people, when they wandered in the desert of Sinai. Hunger and the threat of starvation were their constant companions in that harsh and barren land. Yet the Psalmist reminds them that God was with them, even in the wilderness. God “rained down manna,” so they might eat “the bread of angels”. In the congregation I serve, perhaps as in yours, there are people who also offer the “bread of angels” in wilderness times. We call them the Parish Life helpers and the Congregational Care Team. You may use a different name. They are the people in every congregation who cook. When someone is sick or a loved one has died, they show up with a casserole or a container of soup. They organize the receptions after memorial services. They bake the cookies, put on the coffee, pull out the good table cloths, and do everything else needed to offer comfort and hospitality to the family and loved ones in their ‘It’s All Too Much’ grief. On Wednesday we remembered Muriel Earle---woman of faith---snicker-doodle baker, birthday card sender, and visitor of shut-ins---mediator of the steadfast love of God. Today, we gather at the Lord’s table to remember the ways in which Christ Jesus is God’s bread of life for the whole “It’s All Too Much For Me” world of amnesia.