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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Sunday closest to July 20 |
| Proper 11Year ARCL |

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| ***Track 1*** |  |  |
| Genesis 28:10-19aPsalm 139: 1-11, 22-23Romans 8:12-25Matthew 13:24-30,36-43 |   |  |

**The Collect**

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Spring and Summer of 2010, my mother came to live at my house and died, ultimately, of a brain tumor. It went something like this. She was supposed to come up on a Friday in March. She called on a Wednesday. I was driving home. “Something is wrong with my brain,” she said. In the next few exchanges, she made it clear that she would not be traveling to me by herself, I was to come get her from San Antonio. Over the next 5 months, her health steadily declined, and in the end she did not make the trip back to Texas alive.

She arrived just after the winter of Snowmageddon. My house got 3 feet of snow in December and another 2 in February. There was snow still on the ground when she arrived in March. She never saw her friends again, but in a sense, they came with her to the frozen north. Of course they called, she called them. She had a way of talking with them that sounded almost exuberant. It was clearly her wish that they not know how she entered depression, that she quickly became unable to walk on her own and then unable to walk. A friend of hers sent the CD, “Days of Grace: Meditations and Practices for Living with Illness,” with the author Mary Earle, who was a priest in her parish, reading her book. On that CD, there is a meditation on this psalm. My mother’s connection line to her friends and to her past life which was lifted in prayer by her community, as well as her connection line with God, became centered on the psalm we read today. I will forever associate this psalm with my mother as she listened and prepared for her own death. She never was able to really speak deep thoughts again; I will never know exactly *what* the psalm meant to her, but I know that it meant the world.

It is then not surprising that I saved for easy access, my translation of the Hebrew from when we studied this psalm in seminary. Many of you may have gathered that the verb “to know” in Hebrew serves many purposes. Yes, it is used for carnal or sexual knowledge between a husband and wife as in “and Isaac knew Rebekkah.” Generally, biblical Hebrew does not have many phrases about the knowledge of facts, but “to know” in Hebrew is knowledge that is intimate. For one to say that God knows you, is to realize that there is nowhere to hide. It is not so much that one would want to hide from God, but that God inhabits all that is known. If that is the case, there is nowhere one can go, and nowhere we can land, from which God is absent.

The psalm shows us the psalmist’s sense of being accompanied. That is not to say that this is a warm fuzzy feeling—- although it can be; or that everything will be okay…that it all comes out in the wash— it may or may not, but the faith of the psalmist is that God is present when things are not good and when they are good. This is what it is to be known. It is not just how we present ourselves when we come to church or meet people in the grocery store. It is how we are when we are reduced to tears in the wee hours of the morning or any other time that no one else is watching.

This knowledge God has of a person can be imagined as close as the person’s very breath. It is the very breath when things are good and not so good. And to be clear, it is not that darkness is vanquished for us with God. But darkness for God is different. My class’s translation of verse 11 is “Even the darkness [is] not darkness by you; the night is like day, you cause darkness to shine like light.” The tears, despite the sadness or dystopia or anger or despair, do not consume us. When we feel diminished, less than who we can be, we are still accompanied by God, who does not wait for us to have it together. There is holiness in the tears.

This knowledge God has of us can be thought of from conception onward— the very knowledge that the creator has of creation. The verbs that the psalmist uses for being made are “woven” or “weaved, formed.” It is the art of an excellent weaver. It is the excellent weaver who formed and also inhabits that which the Weaver makes.

The truth of this psalm is present before the time of Jesus dwelling on the earth and after. For Christians, Jesus is the light present at the beginning, which does not change or cancel the accompanying presence of God the creator. This resting in the presence of God is perfectly acceptable and desirable, and yet, a belief in and understanding of the redemption that Jesus offers gives more. It gives the gift of the Spirit.

I find this particular passage in Paul’s letter to the Romans difficult. And yet, it is this same intimacy we have with God and share with all creation, through the Spirit of God. Through Jesus we are children of God, we cry “Abba”, and then just as Jesus is an heir, so are we. And we wait for full unity, wait in our brokenness, because we are broken and we will suffer. We, like the pregnant woman, groan in labor pains, and God hears us.

This time is thought of “already and not yet.” We have redemption and we wait for redemption. When we fail to see the redemption we already have, the God accompanying us on our journey, then we lose heart. When we fail to realize there is more, we lose hope. It is because we are known intimately by God that we can hope even when things seem hopeless. It is this intimacy with God that allows us to love with all our heart, even when we lose heart.

In the words of the poet , *Lorraine Healy*, it sounds like this:

**The Beauty of the Shattered Heart**

The shattered heart sings
inexplicably and cringes at nothing,
not even its own faithful aching.
What blasts it matters little,
only that even in shards it stays
hungry and ready.
The wise will tell you
you’ll love again, child,
that shattered heart glued
piece to piece by a faith
thick as pitch and just
as fragrant.  The heart,
once shattered, finds its vocation,
its unrenouncing ways.  In its cage,
the shattered heart sings its little song,
unwavering and busy,
through everything, determined,
sweetly deranged.
This is the beauty of the shattered heart:
compelled to grief, and so indomitable
it tramples sorrow after sorrow
on its obstinate way to light.

With God in Christ, who accompanies us in death, who accompanies us in all the dark places, we too are trampling out death by death, on our obstinate way to light.