



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

*June 28, 2009*  
*Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*  
*Jim McDonald*

RCL: Today's Revised Common Lectionary readings are listed at the beginning of the reflection that pertains to them.

LM: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12-13; 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43 or 5:21-24, 35b-43

*Psalm 130*: A penitential psalm with powerful affirmations, this is a call to Hope, with a capital "H." **It is not enough to hope for small things, for changes that seem possible.** The hope we place before God comes from an aching sense that the world and we ourselves are far less than we could or should be. We hope for a world without hunger, war, or oppression. "Out of the depths I cry to thee" (v. 1, RSV). No suffering is too great to separate us from God. "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?" (v. 3, RSV). No one—not anyone—merits God's favor. "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (v. 4, RSV). No sin or evil deed is too heinous for God to forgive. And thus, "My soul waits, and . . . I hope" (v. 5). Emily Dickinson wrote: "Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul, / And sings the tune without the words, / And never stops at all."<sup>1</sup> We hope "more than those who watch for the morning" (v. 6). **We hope for redemption, for a New Creation, as we pray and wait.** And so we live and work for justice and peace.

*2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27*: David grieves the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.

The father and son were killed in battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 31:2-4). Though Saul was a controversial figure in Israel's history, David honors him unabashedly with a song of lament. David also honors his close relationship with Jonathan, as well as lamenting Jonathan as a person. The content of these verses seems less important than David's act of mourning. Our culture attempts to minimize the need to grieve our losses. But grieving is necessary work because it purifies our hearts and creates the space wherein the Spirit of hope can come and dwell. Grieving brings to mind the things that made someone unique. Grieving helps rid us of distortions about the past and gives our lives a more honest perspective. We can prize the ways we have grown, the things we have learned, the goodness we have touched, the gifts we have been given, and the love we have shared. Grieving helps us in our moment of loss to name and define our experience in the past so that we can grab the best of it and bring it with us into the future, leaving the rest behind. David's grieving sets the stage for his reign as Israel's greatest king. Our grieving may prepare us for new works of advocacy as a way to honor those we have lost and join ourselves with the purposes of God. Many social movements and organizations around the world have just such a genesis. Can you think of some?

1.

Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, Part I: Life, Poem 32 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924).



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*2 Corinthians 8:7-15:* Paul educates the church in Corinth on the meaning of stewardship. The previous year that church, apparently relatively well-off financially, had started to raise money, along with several other congregations, to help the Jerusalem church. The churches in Macedonia, though quite poor, had contributed to the effort, even beyond their means. But for some reason the Corinthians hadn't completed their part of the effort. Now Paul is trying to goad them into finishing, without commanding it (v. 8). At stake here is not just the task of "raising the money"; rather, it's the motivation behind the money. Paul wants to infuse their giving with the spirit of generosity (see vv. 2 and 7). He equates grace and generosity; both are the uninhibited, unconditional outpouring of ourselves for others in love, as Christ did. Paul wants there to be a fair balance between abundance and need. If we take Paul's words about "abundance and need" to heart in today's world, what would that mean about the amount of money we give away personally, as a church, and as a nation? Whose wealth is it anyway?

*Mark 5:21-43:* A powerful story of healing, personal and social. Two daughters are healed—one, the twelve-year-old daughter of a prominent religious leader; the other, an older woman of limited means, probably at the margins of Galilean society, who had become destitute unsuccessfully seeking medical care over the past twelve years. These two women and the way in which they came to Jesus' attention couldn't have been more different. What is striking is that Jesus does not allow Jairus's privilege, prominence, and pleading to dim his sensitivity to the poor woman's plight. Poignantly, Jesus calls her "daughter," reminding her—and us—that she is part of the community. Then, just as he had to challenge the social stigmas of class and gender to heal the older woman, Jesus challenges the social ignorance that denies the possibility of healing for Jairus's daughter. Both rich and poor need healing, and both can be healed in Jesus' name.

### *Children's Time*

Read a children's book on death and grief, such as Judith Viorst's *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*, illustrated by Erik Blegvad (New York: Aladdin Books, 1987), or Charlotte Zolotow's *My Grandson Lew* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

### *Musical Suggestions*

Hope of the World—BP 176

There Is a Balm In Gilead—BP 132

Canto de Esperanza (Song of Hope)—PH 432

By the Waters of Babylon (or By the Babylonian Rivers)—PH 245 or 246

God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending—PH 422

1.

Poem 32 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924).

Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, Part I: Life,



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Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year B  
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