

# MOSAIC bible reflections ... listening to the still, small voice of God

Moving deeper into Scripture through the Art of Lectio Divina, gathering up the fragments so that no thought is lost

Friday, October 18, 2013

## Lectio & Labyrinth: A Parable about Patience and Persistence in Prayers for Justice

This week we weave together the ancient spiritual practices of [Lectio Divina](#) with walking the [Labyrinth](#) as we pray with Luke 8:1-8. Do you have easy access to a Labyrinth that you could walk? If not, you can take this Link to a finger Labyrinth that you can download and print: [PDF File/Labyrinth](#). If you prefer, I'll give you a link below to an online labyrinth within your experience of Lectio.

**Thus says the LORD:  
Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths,  
where the good way lies; and walk in it,  
and find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16ab**

Both Lectio Divina and Walking the Labyrinth are ancient spiritual pathways to God. Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase that means "sacred reading." It is a way of praying and listening for the still, small voice of God speaking through gentle reading of scripture. Lectio Divina has also been known as "listening with the ear of the heart." Beginning in the middle ages, Christianity adopted the Labyrinth as a symbol, changing the design to permeate it with specifically Christian meaning. For almost a thousand years there has been an identifiable Christian labyrinth tradition.



*Celtic Triple Spiral Labyrinth at Grunewald Guild in Plain, Washington Photo by Cindy Serio*

Today's passage is often called the "Parable of the Unjust Judge." And yet, in the first verse we are told that the parable is about the disciple's fading faith, their "need to pray always and not to lose heart." We might read into this that his followers were not praying and perhaps were in danger of "losing heart" because their prayers were not being "answered." I can relate to that, can you? The disciples were not a lot different from people today who wonder why their \$5 worth of prayers are not bringing them their \$5 worth of rewards.

Perhaps we ask, just as they were, "why is God not answering my prayer?" To this question Jesus tells an almost puzzling parable.

In her book, [The Parables for Today](#), Alyse M. McKenzie tells us, "Parables are short narrative fictions that seek to make

### About Me



**CINDY SERIO**

Hello and Welcome! I am an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church appointed to develop a ministry of spiritual formation which I call MOSAIC

Spiritual Formation Ministry. I have an M.A. in Spiritual Formation from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and have been a spiritual director for 10 years. I focus on bringing contemplative practice and the creative process to retreats, workshops, worship experiences and my online adventures!

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### Translate

*So ... dear reader, how is your prayer life?*

And now, here is a 1-line interpretation of this parable by an elderly black minister that Fred B. Craddock relates in his book [Interpretation: Luke](#). "Until you have stood for years knocking at a locked door, your knuckles bleeding, you do not really know what prayer is."

*So ... dear readers, what is the state of your knuckles?*

So often we think there is something wrong with our prayers or with us when we pray fervently and do not get the answer we want or ... we pray and nothing changes. Our life stays the same. But ... *Do we stay the same? Do we allow God to change our heart so that we are in tune with the heartbeat of God in our situation? What is God telling us about our own spiritual life and prayers through this parable that Jesus shares with the disciples whose faith seems to be fading away? What does this parable tell us about God?*

Please note that in this parable God is NOT the unjust judge. Although, God does work through the unjust judge to grant justice to the widow, a marginalized woman in a dangerous time to be alone.

God is the One who grants justice! Let us meet God in our Prayers!

Settle into a place of loving openness within yourself with a simple [Breath Prayer](#). Use this one or allow one to emerge as you breathe in and breathe out. (*I have found that six to eight syllables is best for breathing but a longer prayer often speaks what we need to hear for ourselves ... simply be authentic with your breath prayer*)

Breathe in ... **God of Justice** (Your Name for God)  
Breath out ... **Hear My Heart's Cry** (Name Your Desire)

Pray: **God of Justice, I cry out to you day and night and never stop pleading with you. Give me patience, fill me with persistence as you change my heart to accept your desire for my prayers of justice for the world and for the way I am called to embody those prayers in my daily life. In the name of Jesus Christ, the One who brings Justice to the World. Amen.**

**Read Luke 18:1-8.** Engage in Lectio Divina, Praying with Scripture. Allow yourself to be drawn deeply into God's Presence as you read and pray and listen for the whispers of God. Allow yourself to notice how you would feel if you were the widow crying out for justice. Is there anyone that you know who may be in this situation and whose seems to be "losing heart?" As you read and pray and walk with this passage move in prayer and solidarity with that person. Perhaps that person is you ...

***Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"***

**Read** this passage again slowly. Consider where God is calling your attention. **Reflect** on just a word or phrase. Spend time with your word or phrase and listen to the whispers of God through the words that have drawn you into the text ... Listen! Take a walk on the Labyrinth or spend some time outside in nature. Find a place to sit quietly. Let the Spirit of God guide you.

Turn your word or phrase or image over in your mind. Let God speak into your heart as you listen. Take time to "**Release**" anything that emerges that you need to let go of in order to move on in your prayers.

As you pause at the center of the Labyrinth, take time to "**Receive**" and welcome God's word for you. Consider these questions or others that may arise in your time of pause: *Where is God speaking into my life through my word or phrase? How is my prayer life touched by my word or phrase?*

Before you begin your journey anew from the center, slowly Read the passage again. Turn your attention to your word or phrase. Know that it is ok if you are being drawn in a different direction on this reading!

Consider how you will "**Respond**" to what you have heard from God ...

As you walk or move out of the center along the same labyrinth path you took in, know that you are gaining strength for your continuing journey of life. *Who is God calling me to pray for or to reach out to through this passage? How is God calling me to change?*

As you reach the end of the Labyrinth pathway, it is time to **Rest** in the silence of God's Presence. Allow God to draw you deeper into the shining light of the Holy Presence and into the prayerful sense of God's Spirit, ever holding you and loving you. Let all the words fade away and stay in this lovely place as long as you can.

Simply BE with the God who always hears your prayers.

Be aware that you may find a desire to express what you have received. This is a wonderful time to journal, to write about your experience, thoughts, feelings, and insights. Some persons find that God's voice is clarified through the writing process.

Prayer: **O God of my Heart, I know you hear my prayers but sometimes it doesn't feel that way. Help me to be patient and to simply continue praying even when life doesn't make sense. Help me hear your gentle whispers in my heart as I pray and change me. Help me to notice and pay attention to those places in life where I can not only pray for justice but can work for justice too! In the name of Jesus Christ the Justice-Bringer, Amen.**

Posted by Cindy Serio at [1:32 AM](#) 

Labels: [Luke 18:1-8](#), [prayer](#)

## The Lectionary

**MOSAIC bible reflections follows the revised common lectionary readings.**

**The Lectionary** is a 3-year series of scripture passages that are read throughout the year in a worship service and/or personal devotion. The new lectionary year begins with the 1st Sunday in Advent. We are now in Year C of the cycle which means most of the gospel readings will come from the book of Luke. Readings from the gospel of John are interspersed throughout the 3 years. Often, the message proclaimed during worship is based on the passage which is read aloud right before it.

## Lectionary Readings

### Lectionary Readings

#### December 1, 2013

Read these NRSV texts online at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#)

Isaiah 2:1-5  
Psalm 122  
Romans 13:11-14  
Matthew 24:36-44

**Liturgical Color: BLUE or PURPLE**

## Lectio Divina

**MOSAIC uses the ancient art of *Lectio Divina*, which is a receptive mode of seeking God's presence in the biblical text.**

**Lectio Divina** is a Latin phrase that means "sacred reading." It is a way of praying and listening for the still, small voice of God speaking through gentle reading of scripture. St. Benedict called Lectio Divina "listening with the ear of the heart."

Although there are essentially 4 movements: lectio (read), meditatio (reflect), oratio (respond), and contemplatio (rest) there truly are as many ways to creatively engage the biblical text through lectio divina as there are creative people who read the bible with not just their mind but their entire being. I'll guide you gently but I encourage you to surrender to God and listen to what you are "hearing with the ear of your heart."

I have found that God can speak the words I need to hear through any scripture I am blessed to read ... or not to speak at all :) Each week I'll choose a portion of the lectionary consisting of about 10 verses, more or less. When we are seeking God by receiving the text contemplatively more than that will give us spiritual indigestion!

Over the course of time, I'll share reflections, my own "processing" art or photography, art and photos in the public domain or shared with permission, suggest youtube videos with music or other website material to help you explore the themes of the text. I encourage and invite you to engage your "right" brain through your own creative writing and art.

You may want to check out this GREAT online resource: [Audio Lectio at Alive Now](#)

## Bible Study Tools

Bible Versions are the **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version or the **NLT**=New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Great NEW translation **CEB**=Common English Bible

Listen to the Bible Passage, look up the passage in a different translation, or use various other Bible Study tools at [BibleGateway.com](#).

Look up Bible Passages in the NRSV and use various other Bible Study tools at [Oremus.com](#).

**BW**=Word translation content on this blog is done

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**HC**=Definitions come from the [Harper Collins Bible Dictionary](#).

**TDNT**=Additional Word Study Tool used [The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#).

## Labels

[1 John 4:7-21](#) [1 Samuel 3:1-10](#) [1 Timothy 2:1-7](#) [2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1](#) [Acts 17:22-31](#) [Acts 1:1-11](#) [Acts 2:1-21](#) [Acts 2:14a and 22-32](#) [Acts 2:14a and 36-41](#) [Acts 2:42-47](#) [Acts 7:55-60](#) [advent](#) [Alpha and Omega](#) [anointing](#) [aroma](#) [ascension](#) [Ash Wednesday](#) [be still](#) [betrayal](#) [blessing](#) [Bread of Life](#) [call](#) [change](#) [chiasm](#) [Christ](#) [Christmas Eve](#) [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) [Images](#) [Communion](#) [compassion](#) [confession](#) [Covenant](#) [Creation](#) [Creator](#) [God](#) [darkness](#) [desert](#) [divinity](#) [doubt](#) [earth](#) [Ecclesiastes 3:1-11](#) [Elohim](#) [enthronement](#) [psalm](#) [Epiphany](#) [eternal life](#) [Eternal One](#) [Eternity](#) [Eucharist](#) [Exodus 20:1-17](#) [Exodus 20:8](#) [Exodus 33:12-23](#) [Ezra](#) [faith](#) [family](#) [fasting](#) [fire](#) [follow](#) [foot washing](#) [forsaken](#) [Genesis 17:1-7 and 15-16](#) [Genesis 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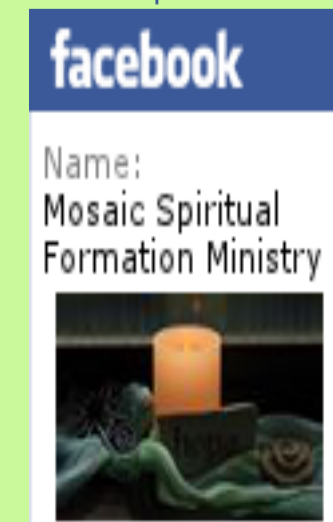
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